

THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EMBEDDED REPORTER PROGRAM IN FUTURE CONFLICTS

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Strategy

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EMBEDDED REPORTER PROGRAM IN FUTURE CONFLICTS, by LCDR Raymundo Villarreal Jr., 106 pages.

The embedded reporter program in Operation Iraqi Freedom was a huge undertaking, requiring extensive planning and coordination to organize and implement. The Department of Defense (DOD) invested much time and resources to help give the media relatively unfettered access to soldiers on the battlefield. A search on Google or any other search engine will yield a proliferation of articles and references on the embedded reporter topic. At present, there is much information, but limited relevant analysis that is of specific value to the battlefield commander or the strategic decision maker. The purpose of this work is to evaluate the feasibility of the DOD implementing the embedded reporter program again in future major conflicts. This research concludes that the embedded media program is a feasible and effective means for the DOD and the United States Army to facilitate the media on the battlefield and should be an element in media policy for future military conflicts.

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ACRONYMS

24/7	twenty four hours a day, seven days a week
9/11	11 September 2001
AAR	After Action Report
AOR	Area of Responsibility
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
CENTCOM	US Central Command
CFLCC	Coalition Land Force Component Commander
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CNN	Cable News Network
DOD	Department of Defense
DTG	Date-Time-Group
FM	Field Manual (Army)
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
ID	Infantry Division (e.g., 4th ID)
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IO	Information Operations
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JDAM	Joint Direct Attack Munition
JFLCC	Joint Land Force Component Commander
JIB	Joint Information Board
MMAS	Master of Military Art and Science
NMP	National Military Press Pool

NOK	Next of Kin
OASD(PA)	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OOTW	Operations Other Than War
OPSEC	Operational Security
PA	Public Affairs
PAD	Public Affairs Detachments
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
PGM	Precision-Guided Munition
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
UJTL	Universal Joint Task List
UNITAF	Unified Task Force, Somalia
UNOSOM	United Nations Operations in Somalia
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On Thursday, 20 March 2003, as the ground war commenced in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), another major Department of Defense (DOD) campaign began in earnest throughout the Iraqi theater of operations. In order to accurately portray the substance and nature of combat operations by units of all the service branches--Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines, DOD implemented its embedded reporter program, giving journalists of various media sources unfettered access to US soldiers, sailors and marines as the war unfolded. As a result, the American viewing public had unprecedented access to live and near real time video feeds of US troops on the ground, either from the major broadcast networks, the cable news outlets or from internet news websites. The average American could actually watch on-going operations as they happened or get a live report from an embedded journalist relaying the specifics of what he or she just observed. The war in Iraq was made available to the American public in a new and innovative manner, all designed by DOD itself.

Any discussion of the effectiveness of the embedded reporter program during OIF requires a broad lens with which to identify and focus on the number of elements and key players that affect the larger military-media relationship. It also requires an evaluation of the stated goals of the program, as well as how successfully and effectively it was implemented and executed. After contemplating these preliminary aspects, we can then draw conclusions about the merits, benefits and the value added by the embedded journalist to the policy makers and military commanders, who are actually providing the access to the journalists and facilitating the process.

Background

The concept and practice of providing the American public journalistic coverage of its wars is not new. Names, such as Ernie Pyle, Joe Galloway, and Peter Arnett, have become indelibly associated with the media and its role in covering America's wars. The 1991 Gulf War, Operation Desert Shield, saw the coming of age of the cable news era, notably CNN, whose reporting in and around Baghdad during the conflict set a new standard in providing live wartime coverage. The concept of embedding reporters is also not new. More recently, the US Army experimented with embedding a small number of reporters in Afghanistan during the later stages of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).¹ Taken in context, this reflects the evolutionary nature of the war correspondent.

Yet, the early wartime coverage of the war in Iraq was different from any other conflict simply due to the number of reporters who had access to the troops and the speed at which information was reported. The news reporting itself seemed to become part of the phenomena and a part of the story. The proliferation of information by the various media outlets, the continuous demand for news twenty-four hours a day, the growth of the Internet, as well as advancements in technology all account for the look and style of reporting we observed during the early days of the war.

It also reflects a dynamic that places Americans at home, whose collective public opinion has a significant impact at the strategic level of policy formulation and execution, in a position to observe the tactical aspects of the battlefield. Tactics so observed may then directly influence a strategic element and vice versa. Thus, the inhuman and ugly aspects of war (or even a relatively benign incident) convincingly portrayed in an unfavorable light by the embedded journalist can have an incredible strategic impact on

the conduct of the war, outside the sphere of control of the operational commander on the field. This immediate potential effect on the public consciousness, given the speed of media reporting, is a unique characteristic on the embedded reporter program during OIF.

The embedded reporter program further reflects the larger military-media relationship which has had its own difficult and contentious history. The military and media have always been, to some degree, distrustful and critical of one another since the start of American armed conflict. This tension and friction is, in and of itself, not unhealthy to a democracy that places intrinsic value and trust in a free press, but can often operate at the expense of the entity being reporting on, that is, the military. Given the controversy in the United Nations in late 2002 and early 2003 over the legitimacy of the US lead coalition and divided US opinion at home, DOD's initiative to welcome hundreds of journalists to observe and report on the conduct of the US military represented a calculated risk to mold public opinion to support of the war.

The Research Question

As can be expected, both the US military and the media had different motivations for participating in this program. From the military perspective, it is relevant to ascertain whether the program was effective, that is to say, did it meet the objectives for which it was designed? Another central concern is what did the military learn from the experience with regard to the actual effect on battlefield operations? The impact on operations and planning is of significant importance for the US Army, since the best "reportable" material seemed to come from reporters assigned to coalition ground forces in action. Thus, how do embedded reporters shape the battle space? These questions form the basis for evaluating the program from its inception to actual execution.

From a detailed analysis of the process and assessing the effect that embedded journalists had on the strategic aspect of the campaign, we can determine the “lessons learned” that have a direct bearing on present operations, and more importantly, future conflicts. There are significant media policy implications for the Department of Defense that emerge with this program. Will the American viewing public demand the same level of access in every future major conflict? Were the associated costs and risks of embedding reporters worth the effort? Does determining that the embedded reporter program was effective in OIF necessarily mean that it is appropriate for the next war? Was this a one-time affair between the military and the media, significant because of unique circumstances during OIF that may not be applicable in the next conflict? It is the future consequences of the embedded reporter program that the research question seeks to answer in this study. Do the successes of the embedded media program in Operation Iraqi Freedom make it the model for battlefield reporting in future US conflicts?

Assumptions

The analysis of researched material will be predicated from the following assumptions: that the role of the embedded media in OIF was the latest in the evolution of the wartime correspondent, that this was an unpopular war and that the results overall were positive. A preliminary examination of the evidence seems to support all three conjectures, notably that both the military and media were satisfied with the effort and results. The difficulties in this analysis will, of course, be to screen and identify material and evidence that is relevant to the US military perspective, rather than that of the media and the reporter. The final assumption is that there is some relationship between media influence (i.e., reporting) and national policy and military operations. This seems

validated given the prima facie evidence that DOD implemented the embedded reporter program in the first place.

Key Terms and Definitions

The following terms are defined for the purpose of clarity, as they will be referred to later in the study.

CNN Effect. A generalized expression that refers to the media's ability to immediately affect events globally due to rapid dissemination of information in various mediums, notably television.

Embedded Reporter. Any media journalist contractually registered with the Department of Defense to travel with military units during combat operations for the purpose of reporting first-hand experiences to the media. In exchange for access, lodging, food, transportation and security provided by the embedding unit, the reporter agrees to abide by promulgated ground rules which stipulate appropriate conduct during combat operations.

Ground Rules. A list of formal rules and instructions promulgated by the Secretary of Defense outlining the administration of the embedded reporter program during OIF. These ground rules provided specific guidance to military commanders and personnel in theater regarding the treatment and handling of the embeds during military operations.

Soda Straw. A metaphor which characterizes the limitations of an embedded journalist's reported content, as it may be detailed with regard to a specific operation but lacking overall perspective, insight, or context of importance to the media target audience being reported to. Security considerations of the embed ground rules may also have

restricted the reporter from sharing broader perspectives with the news anchor in the studio.

Unilateral. Any media journalist reporting on the battlefield who is not an embedded reporter, that is to say, not contractually associated with the DOD embedded reporter program. These journalists do not have any right to access to military units or any of the benefits afforded the embedded reporter. There were numerous unilateral reporters operating between Kuwait and Iraq during OIF.

Limitations

There are relevant limitations that constrained the collection of data during the research portion of this study. The first, and foremost, limitation is that there is no official promulgated either or both “lessons learned” and after-action reports (AARs) from DOD regarding the execution of the embed program. There is much information on the topic, but no specific relevant analysis that would provide value to the battlefield commander or the strategic decision-maker. The second limitation faced by the author was time. There is a proliferation of written material on this topic in print, in academic theses and on the Internet which the author endeavored to analyze in its entirety. The sheer number of people involved, between the reporters and the military personnel who had experiences or observations of the program during combat, translates into hundreds of personal accounts and analyses by reporters, military commanders, academics and the journalism intelligentsia. Attempting to conduct interviews or collect information in a one-on-one format with even a small percentage of the participants would easily exceeded the available time allocated for a one year master’s thesis program. The author therefore was

selective, from a research design perspective, about which key players to seek out and interview given the vast amount of written material on the subject.

Delimitations

Consistent with the time limitation noted above, the author defined delimitations for source material that filtered out research items that did not directly support or relate the research question. The research was limited to embedded reporters assigned to Army and Marine units. This is because this thesis is focused on its effect on the Army, and also since the embedded media themselves tended to favor these assignments over those with the Navy or Air Force. This seems to reflect two realities of a practical nature. First, the background scenery, or “visuals” in media jargon, of the Army or Marine units on the ground were more interesting than those obtained on the more visually-static Navy aircraft carrier or Air Force flight hangar.² Second, the Army or Marine embed could actually observe combat and ground fire for the benefit of the viewing audience.

This study avoided analysis of the larger military-media relationship, except to describe the effect of the embedded program on the whole. It focused on the effect of the program on the Army, rather than that on the media. The author was less concerned about what the media got out of it, although clearly their level of satisfaction no doubt affects their perspective and thus, the overall public relations effort. Finally, the study sought to filter out material submitted by unilateral reporters, except to show any disparate impact on the embed program and the effect on the battlespace.

The research effort does not dwell upon the historical aspects of the military/media relationship, except to briefly elaborate upon the evolutionary perspective

mentioned thus far and to extrapolate the possible outcome of using the embed program in the future.

Significance of the Study

The war in Iraq is a campaign in the greater Global War on Terrorism. Since 11 September 2001, the American public has been acutely aware of our nation's efforts to combat terrorism, in its various forms and regimes. The media has had a constant role to play in this effort, reporting the events and analyzing in turn. Clearly, the military has played its part as well, mobilizing to conduct military operations, Operation Enduring Freedom, in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, in Iraq. The difference between OIF and previous conflicts is the access the embedded reporter program provides the media, given the context of a post-11 September world dominated by the proliferation of instant information across many mediums. While the military has always maintained public affairs officers to handle the exchange of information with the media, the reality of fighting an asymmetric, faceless enemy in a potentially unpopular diplomatic and political context requires the military commander to responsibly manage information operations and public affairs within his or her area of operations.

The effect that the embedded reporter has upon the battlefield, and further up the line to national policy, must be evaluated and understood by the policymakers and military commanders. Given the pivotal role the embed plays in the existing military-media relationship, an understanding of the consequences of the embedded reporter program upon national policy and military planning is of great value to any military commander in the battlespace.

Summary

The embedded reporter program marks a major shift in the military-media relationship at a time where the actions of the US military, in support of the Global War on Terrorism, are under scrutiny both at home and globally. It provides to the media unfiltered, unrestricted access to military operations, in an effort to allow the free press to come to its own conclusion that the United States is doing the right and just thing. The embedded reporter on the battlefield means potentially every military action has strategic and/or global implications, depending on what context it is portrayed. Thus, this thesis aims to analyze evaluate this program, in order to learn what went right and what went wrong, as well as to speculate on its value in the future.

At the conclusion of this study, the following questions will have been answered: How effective was the embedded reporter program in OIF in accomplishing its goals, and in what manner? What are the essential “lessons learned” of the program? Is the embedded reporter the “wave of the future,” that is, is it appropriate for any or all future military conflicts?

¹Bryan Whitman, interview by author, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 16 November 2004.

²Robert Gaylord, interview by author, tape recording, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 16 September 2004.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

A search on Google with the search words “embedded reporter OIF” will return hundreds of hits from a variety of sources. The majority of results from this search represent a variety of formats and media types. One could find the most recent news event from Iraq where an embedded reporter has filed his Internet dispatch in the form of a web log (“blog”), newspaper article or video report. Another could be an editorial piece, written by a newspaper editor or academic pundit, on the objectivity (or lack of) of the reporter while embedded, the so-called “in-bed” perspective. The result might lead to the mention of the phrase in an interview transcript of a key Bush administration official or ground commander, either in answer to a direct question or opining on the subject.

Yet another type of hit could be one of any number of articles on the topic from well-established professional institutions and/or periodicals, either of academic, journalistic or military flavor. The search could lead to an opportunity to buy an embedded reporter’s published book from online wholesalers such as Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble.com, as well as the associated book reviews of these published works. Finally, the results might yield links to academic or professional monographs and theses related to the topic, from graduate students from a number of disciplines and a variety of academic institutions.

The research volume increases geometrically if the search function is expanded to look for the role of the embedded reporter in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, Operation Desert Storm, Somalia and further back. While the variety of

products and related material described above are not exclusive to the topic of the embedded reporter, it clearly highlights the on-going and vibrant nature of this topic and the prodigious volume of multimedia material that it has produced and continues to produce.

The story is still not over. Embedded reporters have become the news. Major news events involving embedded reporters continue to break which have strategic and political implications at home in the United States and abroad. In November 2004, a cameraman on assignment for NBC News and embedded with 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment in Fallujah, videotaped a Marine shooting an unarmed Iraqi, suspected to be an IED-laden insurgent, causing a worldwide furor over the incident.¹ In December 2004, while conducting a “town hall” question and answer period in Kuwait, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was challenged by a soldier on the adequacy of vehicle armor.² The nature of his answer sparked controversy of its own, but a day later, other news sources revealed that a reporter embedded with the soldier’s unit planted the question, raising questions about the propriety of the reporter’s actions.³

In the course of conducting research on this topic, the author gained access to a wealth of relevant material immediately upon starting the effort. This is due in no small part to the author’s proximity to a number of Army Public Affairs officers (PAOs) at Fort Leavenworth, KS, who dealt directly with the embedded media in and around Iraq during OIF. These officers provided their time, firsthand experiences, and perspectives, which lent to the research effort focus, direction, and relevance. These primary sources provided a strong background with which to digest and evaluate the vast amount of material on the topic.

In general, the research on the topic tends to reflect and can be categorized into, three broad perspectives: what the public got out of it, what the media got out of it, and what the military got out of it. As stated in chapter 1, the focus here is not upon what the media gained or learned from the process. This review will focus on the effect of the embedded media program upon the military, specifically upon Army and Marine Corps ground operations, as well as looking at the embedded media influence upon public opinion.

Media Effect upon the Military

Marc D. Felman, in his thesis “The Military/Media Clash and the New Principle of War: Media Spin,” relates the importance of military commanders controlling the nature and effect of reported material by an adversarial media, and recommends changes to doctrine by adding “Media Spin” to a generalized list of “principles of war.”⁴ This work is relevant in its analysis of the role of press pools and in predicting their demise after Operation Desert Storm.

Lafferty and others, in “The Impact of Media Information on Enemy Effectiveness: A Model for Conflict,” postulate that, given the media’s impact on today’s strategic environment, the amount of information available in the media can influence the enemy’s effectiveness on the battlefield. Rather than try to deny information to the media for the sake of operational security, the military should seek to overload the media conduit in an attempt to reduce the enemy’s effectiveness. The study’s Enemy Effectiveness/Media Information (EE/MI) Model reflects this hypothesis and is predicated on an examination of the media’s impact upon the enemy from World War II through Desert Storm. The authors note the CNN effect during Desert Storm and its

perceived impact upon Saddam Hussein and his decisionmakers, suggesting that information overload is a necessary tactic the military must utilize in every future conflict.⁵

Thomas M. Hall provides a solid description and analysis of the military use of press pools in his thesis, “The Military and the Media: Toward a Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement.” His research looks at press pools in Grenada and during Desert Storm, and evaluates the level of access and support the media enjoyed versus the amount of control by the military during operations.⁶ This piece was useful in framing the research methodology in chapter 3.

Stockwell, in his thesis “Press Coverage in Somalia: A Case for Media Relations to be a Principle of Operations Other Than War,” contends that the US Army should revise its doctrine to reflect the role media plays on the strategic and operational levels. The thesis argues that the Army should add media relations to its six operational principles other than war, as listed in its doctrinal FM 100-5, *Operations*, based essentially on a single case study analysis of the media influence and involvement in the Somalia tragedy, an operation other than war.⁷ This piece is relevant in the sense that it highlights the perceived need to change existing Army doctrine to reflect the impact the media has on military operations.

Another comprehensive analysis of US efforts in Somalia is Kenneth Allard’s *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned*. Allard reviews the US role in the United Nation’s intervention in Somalia from a variety of operational perspectives and offers lessons learned in each area.⁸ This work is useful in framing the extent and complexities of US involvement in this joint and multinational humanitarian effort.

Raphael F. Perl, writing for the Congressional Research Service, addresses a different perspective from Lafferty's on the utility of uninhibited media coverage to the terrorists and the enemy. In "Terrorism, the media, and the government: Perspectives, Trends, and Options for Policymakers," Perl looks at the impact of media influence upon public opinion and the possible manipulation of the process by terrorists to help achieve their goals.⁹ While this article focuses on the media and terrorism, and not specifically embedded reporters, it provides a different approach to evaluate the characteristics and impact of what the media reports, and its potential second- and third-order effects upon the military by belligerents and enemies.

Margaret H. Belknap evaluates the "CNN effect" in her article "The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk?" In a case-study format from Panama through Kosovo, this work highlights the evolving military-media relationship and the need for senior leadership and military commanders to better manage the media while mitigating operational risk.¹⁰

Douglas Porch, in "No Bad Stories: The American Media-Military Relationship," addresses the strained relationship the US military has with the media in the post-11 September, pre-OIF period. While slightly dated with regard to OIF and the embedded media program, the article discusses the roots of the strained relationship and reviews possible efforts for improvement up until that point, specifically recommending press pools and embedded media.¹¹ It looks at the embedded media before the fact, and gives a useful perspective in the establishing the research methodology.

In 2002, the US Army's professional journal, *Military Review*, published a number of articles in its January-February issue addressing the Army's continuing role

with the media throughout OIF. These articles:-- “Get Over It! Repairing the Military’s Adversarial Relationship with the Press,” “Improving Media Relations,” and “The Army and the Media”--identify the same strained relationship discussed by Porch, and highlight the Army’s need to find a cooperative balance in dealing with the media in the period leading up to OIF.¹²

Yet another *Military Review* article, by Tammy L. Miracle, “The Army and Embedded Media,” looked at the level of embedded media access during September 2003. Miracle evaluates the complaints of US journalists and makes numerous recommendations for Army public affairs officers to better use embedded media.¹³

A primary reference source for this thesis is Michael Pasquarett’s issue paper, “Reporters on the Ground: The Military and the Media’s Joint Experience during Operation Iraqi Freedom,” issued from the Center for Strategic Leadership, US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Pasquarett summarizes the issues, discussions, recommendations, and conclusions of a September 2003 round-table workshop that included embedded reporters, and several high-level participants, such as Joe Galloway, Brigadier General Vince Brooks, US CENTCOM spokesman, and Major General J. D. Thurman, JFLCC Chief of Operations. The workshop evaluated numerous key issues on the embedded media program via three separate panels addressing the levels of war: tactical, operational, and strategic.¹⁴ Of note, Pasquarett describes the workshop as “an Army After Action Review,” the only such appellation of an official nature given thus far in the literature this thesis identified.

Another seminal source on the topic is the McCormick Tribune Foundation’s report, “Narrowing the Gap: Military, Media and the Iraq War.” The report is a summary

of a 2004 conference between the media and the military held by the foundation, the seventh such conference since the end of the first Gulf War in 1992. The conference was attended by embedded reporters and correspondents, heads of the various news outlets, and publishing companies (*CNN, ABC, CBS, Fox News, New York Times*, and *Washington Post*), and key military and administration officials, thus providing a level of insight and relevance not matched in most of the literature on the subject.¹⁵ The study comprehensively and succinctly focuses on all aspects of the embedded program, from its inception to execution, and analyzes many key issues raised in this thesis, including the thesis question itself.

An article by James Lacey, “Who’s Responsible for Losing the Media War in Iraq,” addresses the military’s inability to consistently engage the media in a manner that produces beneficial and positive results at the operational and strategic level. Lacey, a writer for *Time* magazine embedded with the 101st Airborne during OIF, offers numerous practical recommendations to improving the embedding process.¹⁶

In an article written for the US Army War College’s *Parameters*, Brendan R. McLane also evaluates the embed program. In “Reporting from the Sandstorm: An Appraisal of Embedding,” McLane looks at how the media can better improve its wartime reporting in order to provide the military the most beneficial coverage. He opines on the merit and suitability of embeds at the operational level, beyond the present tactical only, in future conflicts.¹⁷

Most recently, the RAND Corporation released a study in December 2004, conducted on behalf of the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The report, “Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context,”

claims to be “the first report to systematically evaluate the outcome of embedding journalists with troops,” and “is based on a review and analysis of studies, contemporary news stories, and accounts by military officials and journalists.”¹⁸

Media Effect upon Public Opinion

In “Television News and American Intervention in Somalia: the Myth of a Media-Driven Foreign Policy,” Jonathon Mermin looks at the role television reporting played in influencing American foreign policy. This 1997 study details and analyzes the content and frequency of media reporting, seeking to establish causality between reported images of human suffering in Somalia (the CNN effect) and subsequent action by the Bush administration.¹⁹ This piece gives background on the media’s influence on public opinion.

Simon J. Hulme, in his CGSC thesis “The Modern Media: The Impact on Foreign Policy,” addresses the topic of media and its ability to influence foreign policy, either by direct influence on the government or the effect on public opinion, which in turn, affects the government decision-making process. The thesis analyzes sources and examples of media influence upon such decisions and also factors that shape public opinion. Hulme concludes, using a theoretical physics-based model, that the media is capable of affecting its audience and that examples exist where media directly influenced foreign policy, specifically Sarajevo and Somalia. He also suggests the CNN effect has peaked due, in part, to the advances in Internet technology and the maturation of the American appetite for information.²⁰ This piece was useful in establishing a baseline perspective to examine the connection between the media, vis-à-vis the CNN effect and the shaping of public opinion with regard to foreign policy.

Terence Smith, of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, provides an evaluation of the content of media reported material during OIF in his May 2003 article, “The Real-Time War: Defining News in the Middle East.” The article analyzes if the media reported correctly, whether the content reflected the big picture or merely was a “soda straw” view, and whether the media maintained its objectivity.²¹ This article gives a journalist’s evaluation of the quality, veracity and nature of what the embedded media reported up until the fall of Baghdad. It provides a perspective on two key issues: media objectivity and the “soda straw” effect.

Matthew Baum, a professor of political science at UCLA, furthers the premise proposed by Mermin and Hulme between public sentiment and policy decisions. In his study, “How public opinion constrains the use of force: the case of Operation Restore Hope” in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Baum applies numerous hypothetical models to conclude that “concerns over public attentiveness figured prominently in all major Bush and Clinton administration decisions on Somalia.”²²

Verne Gay, in a March 2004 article for *Newsday*, entitled “Back from the Front: A year later, TV’s embedded reporters ponder the merits of how they covered the ‘drive-by war’” relates the observations of numerous reporters a year after their embedded experience. The article addresses a number of key topics: lack of a coherent big picture despite so many “soda straw” views, the “in-bed” objectivity issue, the effectiveness of the embed program, and its utility in future conflicts.²³ While not comprehensive in its analysis, this article highlights many key issues this thesis seeks to evaluate.

The PEW Research Center for the People and the Press conducted a telephone survey in March 2003 to ascertain the public’s opinion of the war. Its report, “TV

Combat Fatigue on the Rise; But “Embeds Viewed Favorably” evaluated the effect of 24/7 news reporting upon the public’s opinion of the media coverage of the Iraq war compared with the first Gulf War.²⁴ This literature provided insight on how the public viewed the embedded reporters, and the quality of information being reported.

In mid-2003, The Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) conducted a content analysis of the embedded reporters on television during the first few days of the Iraq War. In “Embedded Reporters: What are Americans Getting?” the research focused on the “soda straw” aspect of embedded media reporting, and analyzed, in great detail, the nature and content of reported material by the television news outlets.²⁵ It also made subjective judgments about the potential and risks of embedding from the perspective of the media serving the public.

Also in 2003, two new published paperback books addressed the embedded experience, the first on many such works by journalists to put their observations in a longer format than articles in their parent periodicals. *Boots on the Ground* details writer Karl Zinsmeister’s month-long embed with the 82nd Airborne.²⁶ *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq* by Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson is a collection of over sixty perspectives from reporters, pundits, DOD officials, and military officers involved with the embed program during OIF.²⁷

Terry Ganey, writing “Mixed Reviews on Embedded Reporters” for the *St. Louis Journalism Review* in February 2004, describes the “in-bed” loss of objectivity, the fact that only the US side of the war was covered, and a reporting trend that was “soft” on the US military. Ganey, a reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch who was “embedded” with the 4th ID in Iraq, contends that despite the criticism on objectivity issues, the American

public was well served by the embedding process compared to the press pools of previous conflicts.²⁸

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to discover the underlying patterns in the literature supporting the research of the thesis. A number of common themes emerge from reviewing the vast amount of material on the military-media relationship in general, as it relates to the embedded media. First, at no great surprise, the military-media relationship is contentious, strained, and distrustful at worst, and mildly cooperative at best. This is nothing new from a historical context, and there is a staggering amount of literature on this aspect alone.

Second, there appears to be well-established examples of causality between media-influenced public opinion and foreign policy, particularly policy that results in or directly affects military action. The US involvement in Somalia in 1993 is a compelling case study on this theory. It is a robust source of literature, and is relevant to our evaluation of the embedded reporter program in that it describes the strategic impact that media reporting can have upon military operations. The media effect may vary upon one decision-maker to the next, but it influences the decision-maker nonetheless.

Third, the literature indicates a prodigious amount of self-analysis by both the media and the military on how to deal with one another while conducting its business. The military, in particular, seems to agonize over how it should best cope with the media. Every piece of literature on the embedding process reflects this tension, from matters of practicality regarding how embeds are placed or the manner in which news is reported on

the battlefield, to the recurring issues as the “big picture”/“soda straw” debate or discussions on “in-bed” objectivity.

Finally, while there have been comprehensive studies on the embedded program by research organizations, some on behalf of DOD, there still is not much in the way of official assessment of the program by DOD itself, who initiated the program. The fact that, at the time of this writing, there are still embedded reporters with the US military forces deployed in Iraq may account for the lack of an overall assessment and review.

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²Robert Burns, “Rumsfeld Expects Army to Resolve Concerns,” *My Way News* [Web site on-line]; (accessed 09 Dec 04); available from <http://apnews.myway.com/article/20041209/D86S7I381.html>; Internet.

³“Rumsfeld Set Up; Reporter Planted Questions with Soldier,” *Drudge Report* [Web site on-line]; (accessed 09 Dec 04); available from <http://www.drudgereport.com/flashcp.htm>; Internet.

⁴Marc D. Felman, “The Military/Media Clash and the New Principle of War: Media Spin,” (Masters Thesis, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL., 1992).

⁵Brad Lafferty and others, “The Impact of Media Information on Enemy Effectiveness: A Model for Conflict,” *Proteus, A Journal of Ideas* (spring 1994): 1-41.

⁶Thomas M. Hall, “The Military and the Media: Toward a Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement,” (Masters Thesis, Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL., 1995).

⁷David B. Stockwell, “Press Coverage in Somalia: A Case for Media Relations to be a Principle of Operations Other Than War,” (Masters Thesis, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 1995).

⁸Kenneth Allard, “Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned,” *National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies* [Web site on-line]; (accessed 08 Feb 05); available from http://www.ndu.edu/inss/books/Book_authors.htm; Internet.

⁹Raphael F. Perl, "Terrorism, the media, and the government: Perspectives, Trends, and Options for Policymakers," *Congressional Research Service* (22 October 1997).

¹⁰Margaret H. Belknap, "The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk?" *Parameters* 32 (autumn 2002): 100-114.

¹¹Douglas Porch, "No Bad Stories: The American Media-Military Relationship," *Naval War College Review* 55 (winter 2002): 85-107.

¹²Jason D. Holm, "Get Over It! Repairing the Military's Adversarial Relationship with the Press," *Military Review* 82 (January-February 2002): 59-65.; James K. Lovejoy, "Improving Media Relations," *Military Review* 82 (January-February 2002): 49-58.; Barry E. Venable, "The Army and the Media," *Military Review* 82 (January-February 2002): 66-71.

¹³Tammy L. Miracle, "The Army and Embedded Media," *Military Review* 83 (September-October 2003): 41-45.

¹⁴Michael Pasquarett, "Reporters on the Ground: The Military and the Media's Joint Experience During Operation Iraqi Freedom," (Issue paper, Center for Strategic Leadership, U. S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA., October 2003); available from <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usacsl/Publications/CSL%20Issue%20Paper%208-03.pdf>; Internet.

¹⁵Alicia C. Shepard, *Narrowing the Gap: Military, Media and the Iraq War* (Chicago: McCormick Tribune Foundation, 2004).

¹⁶James Lacey, "Who's Responsible for Losing the Media War in Iraq," *Proceedings* 130 (October 2004): 37-41.

¹⁷Brendan R. McLane, "Reporting from the Sandstorm: An Appraisal of Embedding," *Parameters* 34 (spring 2004): 77-88.

¹⁸Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004).

¹⁹Jonathon Mermin, "Television news and American intervention in Somalia: the myth of a media-driven foreign policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 112 no. 3 (fall 1997): 385-403.

²⁰Simon J. Hulme, "The Modern Media: The Impact on Foreign Policy," (Master of Military Art and Science Thesis, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 2001).

²¹Terence Smith, "The Real-Time War: Defining News in the Middle East," *Columbia Journalism Review* [Journal on-line] (May-June 2003): (accessed 10 October 2004); available from <http://archives.cjr.org/year/03/3/smith.asp>; Internet.

²²Matthew Baum, "How public opinion constrains the use of force: the case of Operation Restore Hope," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 no. 2 (June 2004): 187-226.

²³Verne Gay, "Back from the Front: A year later, TV's embedded reporters ponder the merits of how they covered the 'drive-by war'," *Newsday* [Article online] (16 March 2004): (accessed 10 October 2004); available from <http://www.newsday.com/mynews/ny-p2two3710341mar18,0,2367126.story>; Internet.

²⁴Carroll Doherty, ed., *TV Combat Fatigue on the Rise; But 'Embeds' Viewed Favorably*. (Washington D.C.: PEW Research Center for the People and the Press, March 2003) [Report online]: (accessed 10 October 2004); available from <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=178>; Internet.

²⁵Project for Excellence in Journalism, *Embedded Reporters: What are Americans Getting?* (Washington, D.C., Project for Excellence in Journalism, 3 April 2003) [Report online]: (accessed 10 October 2004); available from <http://www.journalism.org/resources/research/reports/war/embed/default.asp>; Internet.

²⁶Karl Zinsmeister, *Boots on the Ground* (New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 2003).

²⁷Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson, *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq* (Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2003).

²⁸Terry Ganey, "Mixed Reviews on Embedded Reporters," *St. Louis Journalism Review* (February 2004): (accessed 10 October 2004); available from [http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc3.asp?DOCID=1G1:113299142&num=2&ctrlInfo=Round91%3AProd%3ASR%3AResult&ao=](http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc3.asp?DOCID=1G1:113299142&num=2&ctrlInfo=Round91%3AProd%3ASR%3AResult&ao=;); Internet.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Making an assessment of the effectiveness of DOD's embedded media program during Operation Iraqi Freedom is a difficult proposition, given the overwhelming number of participants involved, from DOD level policy makers to the military units embedding the media and the embeds themselves, to the vast scale of military operations over a protracted period of time. There are numerous aspects and perspectives to consider and select from before establishing a construct to frame our research, analyses, and evaluation.

The Primary Question

As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this thesis is to evaluate whether the successes of the embedded media program in Operation Iraqi Freedom make it a model for future conflicts. Before answering this question, however, the research methodology must address two secondary questions. First, it must assess the extent of the effectiveness of the embedded reporter program in OIF at accomplishing its goals, as well as the manner it did so. Should the analysis establish the program was in fact effective and valid, the next issue reflects its applicability to future conflicts. Thus, the research methodology must identify what were the essential "lessons learned" that must be addressed in order to make the product suitable in the future.

Secondary Question: Media Effectiveness

The research methodology evaluates four operational vignettes in order to qualify and evaluate the relationship between media policy effectiveness and levels of access and

control. In doing so, it will provide a basis to either validate or invalidate the thesis statement in the particular case of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the embedded media program. This approach also reflects the evolutionary nature of military-media relations that produced the embedded reporter program. The operational vignettes are Operation Desert Storm, Somalia, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, from the start of military operations to the fall of Baghdad. It does not look at the period following the fall of Baghdad and the start of reconstruction. In essence, the research will compare OIF, and its embedded media program, against previous campaigns to evaluate its merit.

The research model drives the research methodology for this question. It defines the DOD's media policy effectiveness as a function of levels of access and control. The research model is shown in Figure 1 as a linear relationship between media policy and two DOD controlled parameters, access and control.

The research model ties policy objectives to outcome. In order to qualitatively assess the extent the media facilitation policy and effort were "effective," it is necessary to first define what we mean by "effective" in some context. This context is based on establishing what the stated goals or objectives the DOD were attempting to achieve in constructing the policy and then evaluating what happened against this standard.

For any given large-scale military operation, DOD must (or at least should) define what objectives or "effects" it hopes to achieve from its interaction with the media. These objectives become the basis for formulation of policy, during which time those charged with creating and implementing a media policy, set the parameters by which the media will interact with the military on the battlefield and the manner in which the media will

gain information. Part of the research effort, therefore, will be to ascertain how DOD has defined its objectives in each of the operational vignettes.

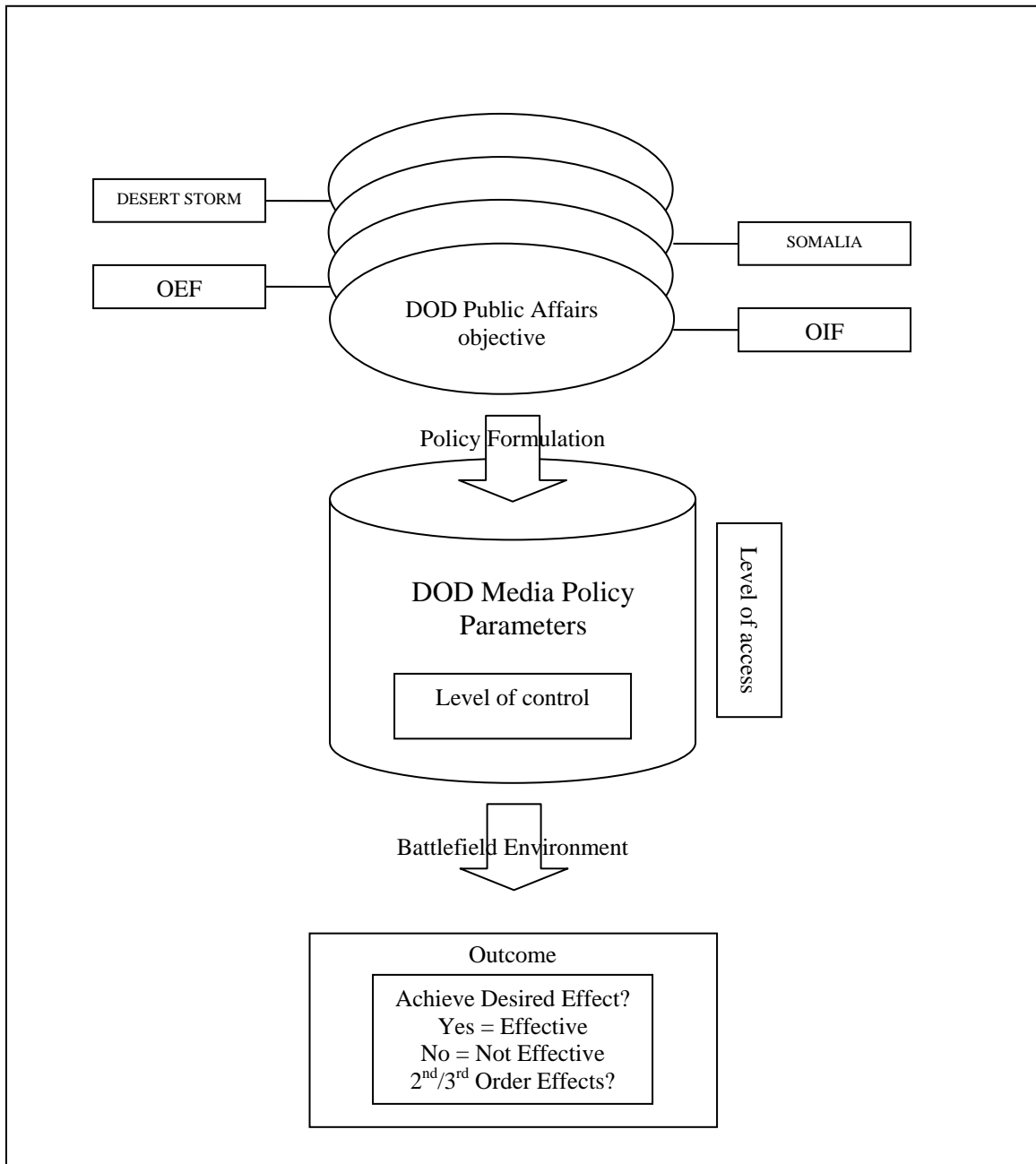


Figure 1. Model for Evaluating Effectiveness of Media Policy

This thesis postulates that DOD media policy effectiveness is a function of two parameters that DOD controls: level of access and level of control. Accordingly, the research will evaluate the levels of access and control as envisioned in policy formulation and in actual implementation and execution of policy. This serves two purposes: it provides a focus from which to evaluate and analyze the literature, and more importantly, it provides a metric to compare policy objectives against the achievement of those objectives on the battlefield.

In chapter 4, the research analysis on effectiveness is organized in three parts, reflecting the research model for effectiveness: Objectives, Parameters, and Outcome. Table 1 organizes this approach in a supporting manner, and, when filled in, will provide a tabular representation of the completed analysis.

Table 1. DOD Media Policy Parameters by US Military Operation				
Operation	Desired Media Effect	Level of control	Level of access	Effective?
Desert Storm				
Restore Hope				
Enduring Freedom				
Iraqi Freedom				

Secondary Question: Lessons Learned

This issue addresses the suitability of the embedded reporter in the future. The research methodology must also evaluate aspects of the embedded media program that did not work or present potential for problems in the future. The operational vignettes reflect the evolutionary nature of the military-media relationship, and therefore may

provide some perspective from which to evaluate the future impact of problems noted during OIF.

Additionally, the research will evaluate if there are other unintended effects from the battlefield. These second and third order effects allow further qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of the media policy against unforeseen circumstances and developments, and may provide the basis for recommendations for improvement.

Finally, any recommended changes or improvements derived from this analysis must be evaluated whether they are feasible or unrealistic for future policy. This evaluation is essential to answering the primary research question.

Summary of Research Methodology

The embedded media program will be suitable for future conflicts if it is found to be effective compared to its objectives, and if its “lessons learned” are realistic and achievable. The research methodology will answer the thesis question and is summarized in figure 2. It is based on a format used by Simon Hulme, in his thesis, “The Modern Media: The Impact on Foreign Policy.”¹

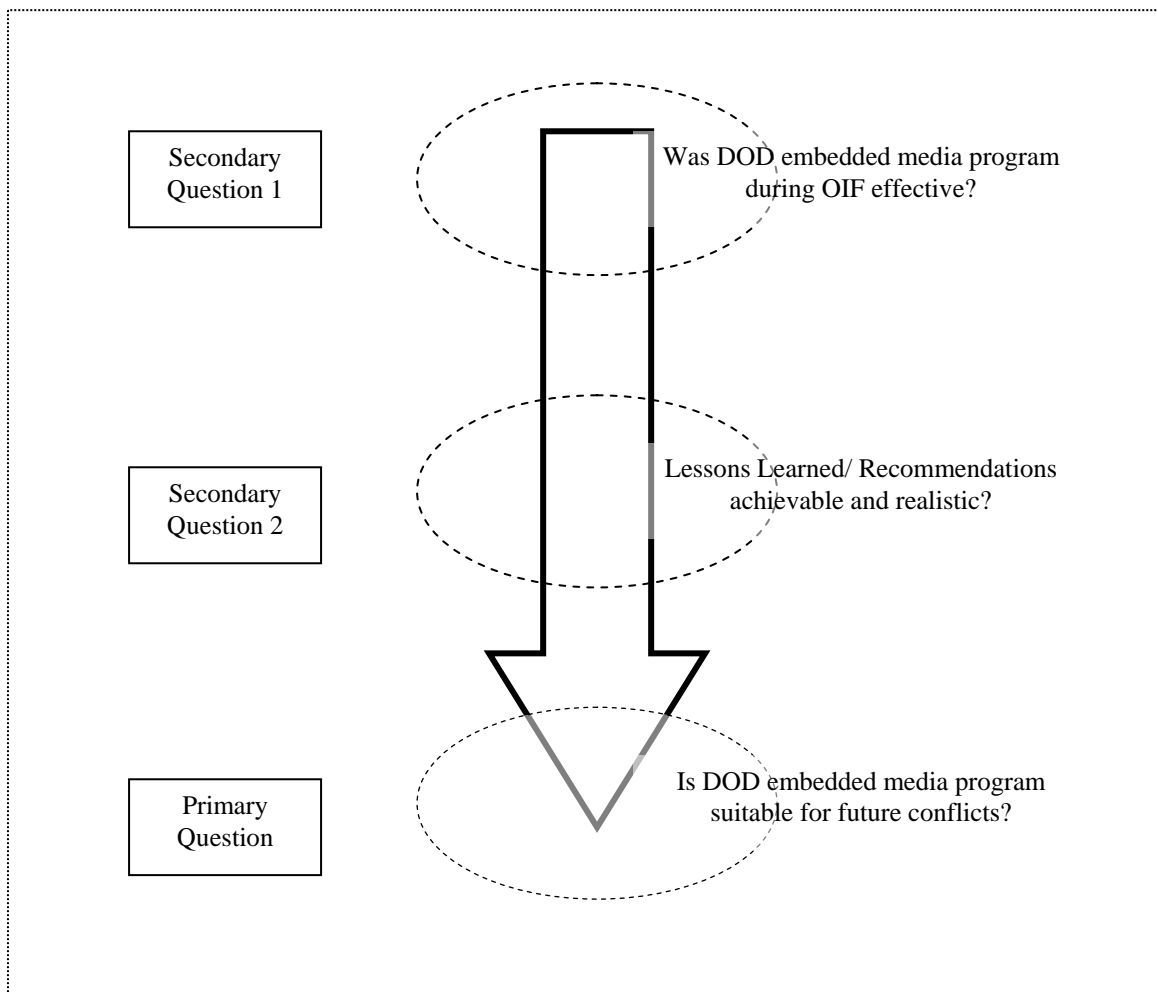


Figure 2. Summary of Research Methodology

¹Simon Hulme, "The Modern Media: The Impact of Foreign Policy" (MMAS Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 2001), 31-32.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Public Affairs Doctrine

The media are like alligators. . . . We don't have to like them, but we do have to feed them.¹

Major General John G. Meyers, Army Chief of Public Affairs

The doctrinal basis for the embedded media program comes from broader public affairs doctrine from both the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the Department of the Army. The Universal Joint Task List (UJTL), issued by the JCS, defines required tasks and capabilities for the US military to be able to plan, program and execute across the full spectrum of combat, from the strategic to operational to tactical levels of war. The UJTL delineates a strategic level-national military capability to be able to provide Public Affairs (PA) worldwide. At the strategic theater level, it requires the military to develop and provide public affairs in theater, further clarifying the ability to plan and provide for external media support and operations.² This guidance provides the basis for the military to engage the media. Additionally, the UJTL addresses the theater strategic capability for targeting systems using non-lethal means.³ This information operations (IO) focused capability is related to public affairs in the sense that the military's effectiveness in media relations can shape the battle space and bring about nonkinetic, nonlethal effects on the enemy. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Coalition Land Forces Component Commander (CFLCC) public affairs (PA) staff worked with IO planners to leverage IO themes and messages to the maximum extent possible, so that PA efforts were complementary to the larger IO plan.⁴

The Army's keystone manual for public affairs, FM 46-1 Public Affairs Operations, states that, "the requirement for the Army to conduct Public Affairs derives from Title 10, US Code which states that the Secretary of the Army is responsible for public affairs and will establish the Office of Public Affairs."⁵ It addresses the Army's requirement to be able to embed the media, noting PAOs "should seek out those members of the media who are willing to spend extended periods of time with soldiers during an operation, *embedding* them into the unit they cover." It further identifies the importance of ground rules in managing media on the battlefield.⁶

Both FM 46-1 and the Army's field manual for public affairs, FM 3-61.1 Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques and Procedures, focus on the extent which Army public affairs must interact and facilitate the media. The key tenets of media facilitation are to "support news media efforts, . . . assisting media entry into the area of operations, registering media representatives, orienting them on the ground rules for coverage, . . . and by facilitating inclusion of civilian and military news media representatives in military units whenever possible."⁷

Thus, the doctrinal basis and conceptual foundation for creating an embedded media program existed well in advance of the program's large-scale implementation during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The military has a doctrinal obligation to facilitate the media during major combat operations.

Operation Desert Storm

Objectives and Desired Media Effects

Prior to the start of Operation Desert Shield in 1990, the Department of Defense (DOD) had identified the use of press pools as the best way to accommodate the requirement to grant access to the media in order to cover military operations. This approach evolved from the deterioration of military-media relations following the Vietnam War, a conflict where many in the military and civilian leadership felt that the media was responsible for losing the war. However, in the years that followed, the prevailing explanation for the lack of American public support changed. It was less the amount of negative press coverage of the war than the US government's lack of a "clearly defined policy with readily attainable objectives in Vietnam"⁸ In any case, the military's pervasive corporate distrust led to the media's exclusion from coverage of the 1983 invasion of Grenada until forty-eight hours after the operation started.

Operation Urgent Fury, which could "be considered the low point in press-military relations to date," led to a call for reform on access restrictions by the press.⁹ The Sidle Panel report in 1984 called for "the implementation of pool systems by the Department of Defense (DOD) in order to provide for initial coverage of any military operations until full press access can be granted."¹⁰ Thus, in 1985, "the Secretary of Defense established the DOD National Media Pool, a civilian news element of approximately 16 media representatives from various national news organizations, with the mission of covering an operation from its initial stages until open coverage could be allowed."¹¹ These journalists would agree to abide by security regulations in the DOD

ground rules and to share information with non-press pool reporters, operating as an entity until a larger number of reporters could be facilitated.¹²

However, the press pool's first test in Panama in December 1989 went poorly. A lack of planning, concerns over operational security and inadequate logistical support for the media led to restricted access and inadequate press coverage, which in turn only exacerbated the military-media relationship.¹³ As a result, General Colin Powell, then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed to military commanders the necessity of adequate planning for media simultaneously with operational planning to ensure media coverage for all aspects of military operations.¹⁴

The press pool, therefore, was still the process in place by which DOD facilitated the media when the United States deployed forces in Operation Desert Shield in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The objective of DOD's media policy was to get the press pool right: avoid a repeat of the Panama debacle and ensure media were on site to cover key events in the military campaign.¹⁵

Media Policy

DOD relations with the media at the start of Desert Storm could only improve. While DOD in general terms needed to better accommodate the press during military operations, distrust of the media nevertheless remained at the highest level. As Paul and Kim note in *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context*, there remained "concerns about access on the part of high-level decision makers such as Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney and Commanding General Norman Schwarzkopf," with Cheney contending that the press was "irresponsible and needed to be controlled."¹⁶

The media policy's control measures, worked out months in advance with the major media organizations, called for press pools, a system of accreditation, and public affairs officers as escorts to facilitate the media.¹⁷ The properly accredited press pool journalist, with escort in tow, would have broad access to the battlefield during the early portions of an operation, in spirit with the Sidle reforms, until such time that the media could gain access on its own accord. The intent was that, at some point, the press pool arrangement would relax to allow more unrestrained media coverage.

Access: Press Pools

The press pools, from the start of Desert Storm, represented a significant control over the media, particularly with regard to access to the battlefield. At the very start of the war, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf used this control to achieve operational surprise by suppressing the press pools initially.¹⁸ DOD had activated the National Military Press (NMP) pool, which brought 17 reporters into Saudi Arabia in early August 1990, which provided a sufficient amount of coverage.¹⁹ However, once combat operations were underway, there were more than 1600 journalists in the Gulf region, while only 186 of these were accredited to gain access to combat units via escorted pools. The media contended that the "press pool system was limiting and inconvenient, and that it resulted in unacceptable delays in reporting important developing events."²⁰ Because of the huge number of nonpool reporters on the scene, the NMP was shut down after two weeks, at which point DOD initiated its own press pools to provide access into theater.²¹

The press pool was the only means to get into Saudi Arabia legally.²² The media's access problems were exacerbated by King Faud of Saudi Arabia, who refused to grant visas to reporters, citing concerns over cultural sensitivities. This, in turn, resulted

in reporters flying to Bahrain and crossing the Saudi border illegally- in effect, these journalists were the first “unilaterals”.²³

The primary objection with the press pools, by those reporters displeased with it, was that it amounted to “censorship by access,”--that is, “what the press pools got to see was decided by military officials.”²⁴ This is not to say that the military intended to prevent coverage of events that the press pool reporters wanted to see, but rather, the program was unresponsive to the majority of their perceived needs.

Control: Security Review

One imposition upon the journalists in the press pool was the media policy requirement for all pooled media products to undergo a security review by a public affairs escort officer on the scene. The security review measure was coupled with 12 ground rules and media guidance that DOD issued on 15 January 1991.²⁵ This combination clearly resembled a form of censorship to the pooled reporter, nurtured by an abiding concern by military commanders that the media might divulge critical details of military plans, operations, capabilities and/or limitations.²⁶ This created disputes over what was releasable and what was not, which in turn contributed to tension between the reporter and the public affairs officers assigned to manage the press pools.

Battlefield Effects

Clearly, the most unanticipated aspect of Operation Desert Storm was the emergence of the so-called CNN effect. The Cable News Network (CNN) revolutionized wartime news coverage with its widely distributed, around the clock coverage of Desert Storm. Hulme, in his thesis “The Modern Media: The Impact on Foreign Policy,”

describes the CNN effect as “the effect produced by the speed of media reporting being capable of reaching a target audience as events occur anywhere in the world.”²⁷ Belknap, in a compelling analysis of the CNN effect, contends that it is both a strategic enabler and an operational risk. Strategic enablers suggests the policymaker can use the media as leverage to communicate strategic objectives and desired end-state, while operational risk implies the danger of compromised operations resulting from too much information disseminated to the enemy.²⁸

Outcome

Following the end of operations, DOD was convinced initially that the pool system was successful and that “the press gave the American people the best war coverage they ever had.”²⁹ This optimistic evaluation, made by a Pentagon spokesman, suggests the DOD media policy accomplished its objectives. Clearly, the military maintained an acceptable amount of control, while at the same time, facilitating and providing access to combat operations much better than before. Media relations were greatly improved and the American mood was that of elation from the success of the war. The American viewing public seemed more than satisfied with what it saw on television.³⁰ Yet, the media was not at all satisfied with the press pools during Operation Desert Storm.

The media noted many problems with the press pool system. Porch explains:

The primary issue was what seemed to journalists to amount to censorship and manipulations, arising from tight restrictions on all media travel. . . . Requests to visit units were frequently rejected because of lack of transport (when not declined for security concerns). The system was cumbersome and unresponsive to breaking news.³¹

The media were not able to gain access to the battlefield in areas where security was not a concern, nor was there a viable support system in place with regard to logistics and transport.³²

Major General Paul Funk, who was commander of the 3rd Armor Division during Desert Storm, echoes this sentiment, noting that major problems were inadequate logistics and support to the media. He commented on this shortcoming as follows in an article for *Military Review* in April 1993:

I'm not sure we thoroughly thought through the implication of fighting in the desert while also providing support to the media. The main problem was support, such as "moving" stories and videotape, considering the great distances involved in getting the media to the locations needed to tell their stories.³³

In essence, the military was ill prepared logistically to handle and accommodate a massive press pool of over 1500 journalists. The majority of journalists who covered Desert Storm was in hotels in Riyadh and Dhahran, away from the battle. Of approximately 1600 reporters in Saudi Arabia, only about 10 percent managed to find and produce newsworthy material.³⁴ When the journalists, who had access to material that was reportable, needed to file their reports, the military was unable to facilitate transmission of the stories, and thus, many stories went unreported, or were severely delayed.³⁵

Despite the problems associated with the press pools, another media-related phenomenon emerged which was as big as the war itself. The advent of the CNN effect was an epochal event in the military-media relationship. The constant, transmission of news and information by the media directly translates into immediate potential scrutiny of policy and operations. Real-time images on television, of success or tragedy, could either supplement or debilitate public opinion and support for a military operation.

Further, the advent of instantaneous news reporting would not only allow audiences and military commanders alike to see events as they were occurring on the battlefield, but likewise it would increase the appetite of the viewing public for such reporting in the future.

From a service perspective, the Marine Corps was much better at assimilating the media than the other services, particularly the Army. Some journalists even pondered whether the Marines received too much coverage in comparison to the Army. Miracle notes that, although the Army outnumbered the Marines by 200,000 soldiers, there were 293 stories about the Marine Corps compared to 271 about the Army.³⁶ The Marine Corps was much better in getting its story out than the Army.

One of the key lessons learned from Desert Storm was that DOD must do a much better job facilitating the media in whatever form the next media policy would take. The limiting factor on DOD to improve further with the media was trust. Despite recognizing the importance of media facilitation to engender public support for an operation, the media “must be trusted not to impair operational security or endanger the troops,”³⁷ notes Major General Winant Sidle, USA, who chaired the 1984 commission whose recommendations led to the National Press Pool.

Ensuring distrust of the media meant that the practical matters of facilitating the media were unfulfilled. The press pool concept was ineffective in putting media in place to report on ground operations that covered vast distances in a dangerous and chaotic environment.³⁸ The logistical and technical support problems could not be solved after the fact, and therefore, ground units could not effectively support the media. The future

focus would have to be on proper planning and prioritization of logistics and transportation.

Somalia

Objectives and Desired Media Effects

The United States' involvement in Somalia was not a major combat operation; rather, it is what the military calls an Operation Other Than War (OOTW) (in this case, humanitarian assistance mission). In the early 1990s, the world's attention was focused on the instability of Somalia, which was embroiled in political chaos and devastating famine. US military involvement in Somalia was in three phases: Operation Provide Relief, Operation Restore Hope, and Operation Continue Hope. In August 1992, Operation Provide Relief consisted of US military transports supporting the multinational United Nations relief effort (UNOSOM I) in Somalia, in order to reduce reliance on truck convoys to deliver food and supplies.³⁹

As Somalia continued to endure a violent civil war, clan militia activity prevented distribution of famine relief supplies. In December 1992, Operation Restore Hope (also called UNITAF (unified task force)), a US-led joint and multinational coalition, was designed to protect humanitarian operations and stabilize the political situation. US Army forces participated in Restore Hope from December 1992 to May 1993.⁴⁰

In March 1993, the U.N. Security Council decided to transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM II, a U.N. sanctioned peacekeeping operation which authorized the use of force, if necessary, to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. The UN mandate also contained a provision to "assist in the reconstruction of economic, social and political life"⁴¹ in Somalia. US involvement in Somalia continued through March 1994 as

Operation Continue Hope after public outcry over the Battle of Mogadishu on 3 October 1993 contributed to President Clinton's decision to withdraw US forces.⁴²

US involvement in the operation enjoyed overwhelming public support initially, but this support began to wane as the perception that the widespread starvation had been taken care of.⁴³ It is ironic that the decisions to both commit forces to and withdraw US involvement from Somalia were heavily influenced by television images from the media.

There were no specific media objectives in Somalia since the US response in late 1992 was initiated as a humanitarian effort and not necessarily a military operation, thus the military could not tightly implement controls.

Media Policy

Accordingly, there was not a stated DOD media policy. The Pentagon did not activate the National Military Press pool system, giving the press a significant amount of freedom to cover the humanitarian relief effort. Since the operation had been announced well in advance, the media seized the opportunity to "define its own access policy and unilaterally (take) up posts in the theater of operations before the military arrived."⁴⁴ DOD did not attempt to facilitate media access into and around Somalia or implement any control measures over content.

Access: Unrestrained Media

The efforts of the US military in Somalia were focused on two main objectives: logistics and force protection. The logistics component relates to facilitating the flow of humanitarian aid into the famine-ravaged country, while the growing violence of Somalia's civil war required US forces to provide a force protection function to the relief

effort. As a consequence, there was no thought as to how many or what impact the media in country would have. As many as 600 reporters from 60 countries were in Somalia from March 1993 to March 1994, enjoying complete freedom of movement throughout the country.⁴⁵

Control: Insufficient PA Personnel

In addition to the lack of a DOD media policy to account for the possibility of so many journalists in the area of operations, the military units in Somalia were lacking sufficient public affairs (PA) personnel to accommodate the free-roaming media. The US commander in UNOSOM II did not have a public affairs team initially to assist him in managing how the unit's mission was perceived at the three levels of war (strategic, operational, and tactical) by the media.⁴⁶ The 10th Mountain Division also addressed this shortcoming in its Public Affairs After Action Report:

The 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y., arrived in Somalia with hundreds of reporters already there, and absolutely no public affairs personnel accompanying them. The first public affairs support arrived at the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, 10 days later and only because the JIB [Joint Information Board] dispatched one of its own PADs [PA Detachments].⁴⁷

Outcome

An effective public information program is critical to the success of any operation, especially involving peacemaking or peacekeeping.

Kenneth Allard, *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned*

In general terms, the planning for media facilitation was not a major consideration in Somalia. There was not a specific DOD media policy, and therefore it was ineffective. Since the operation at its conception was focused on humanitarian assistance, it did not

raise issues that would require the US to have to manage or even facilitate the media as would be the case in a combat operation. Allard describes two key lessons learned from Somalia: first, the necessity of having a public affairs team on the ground first, and second, the importance of the commander to be able to communicate his situational awareness to the media.⁴⁸

Belknap suggests that Somalia was a good example of planning for involving the media, noting that the media had few complaints about their treatment by the military.⁴⁹ While it may be true that the media did not mind, it most likely was due to the fact that there was no DOD media policy in this operation. Belknap's assertion is flawed in that there was no ostensible policy to engage or properly facilitate the media in Somalia. The unrestricted press access that resulted from the absence of a media policy was not helpful as the "coverage became more negative as the cost of continuing the mission increased and the peacekeepers began to engage in open conflict with local militias."⁵⁰

Somalia showed the disparate impact of the lack of media planning upon foreign policy as a result of military operations. In Somalia, television images influenced US foreign policy, both to intervene militarily and as an impetus to withdraw. Kull describes two main reasons Americans appeared to have supported President Clinton's plan to withdraw in six months: the perception that the Somalis wanted the U.N. to leave, and that the US had accomplished its mission by delivering food.⁵¹

By contrast, Hulme attributes the CNN effect as an "accelerant" to policy decision-making, as President Clinton had already notified U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali of his decision to withdraw US forces, when the infamous "Black Hawk Down" images were broadcast around the world.⁵² Similarly, the United States,

under President Bush, had been sending aid to Somalia for a year prior to the major worldwide press coverage which led to further involvement.⁵³

The most important lesson learned was an increased recognition of the importance and usefulness of “engaging” the media more completely in the years following Somalia, especially by military public affairs personnel. Articles began to appear in military professional journals and periodicals reflecting a warming trend from the military perspective. Galloucis, who served as Public Affairs Advisor for the Chief of Staff of the Army from 1996 to 1999, reflected this changing sentiment as he wrote in the Army’s *Military Affairs* in 1999: “The best strategy for dealing with the media is an “engagement” strategy that focuses on routine interactions regardless of what is happening in the world or the Army.” He also made the following analogy:

We must remember that the Army is a “publicly owned corporation.” Its stockholders are soldiers and the American people. Once we fully grasp that concept and all it implies, we will better understand how the media can actually help us reach those stockholders with our key messages.⁵⁴

Operation Enduring Freedom

Objectives and Desired Media Effects

Much has been written about the frenetic planning for a timely military response to the 11 September attacks. The enormity of planning and coordinating for combat operations in a land-locked nation precluded any attention given to facilitating the media. Coupled with the sense of urgency to getting forces into Afghanistan and the necessary operational security concerns attendant to achieving surprise, it comes as no surprise that there were no specific DOD media policy objectives, other than to maintain secrecy.

In October 2002, Secretary Rumsfeld, while speaking to bureau chiefs of the major news organizations, explained the focus of the Pentagon during the initial planning efforts:

We spent days and ultimately weeks trying to get first Special Forces people and later ground forces into Afghanistan, and to do it we had to first develop relationships with the Northern Alliance and then we had to develop an arrangement whereby we could physically get them in there.⁵⁵

Thus, the focus was not on the media as the United States planned to respond militarily in the first operation of the Global War on Terrorism.

Media Policy

At the start of military operations in Afghanistan in October 2001, there was very little open and independent media reporting on the ground. DOD did not call up the national press pool nor had it created a policy to embed media with ground forces. This is not the same as saying there were no embedded media at all. DOD had embedded media on US Navy ships and with Air Force pilots when operations started on October 7th, 2001.⁵⁶ However, access to the battlefield was not initially a consideration due to operational security concerns of US Special Operations forces and CIA operatives working to establish a foothold with the Northern Alliance. Bryan Whitman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs explained the lack of an embed policy this way:

The opportunity for wide-scale embedding really didn't exist. There were plenty of unilateral, independent journalists roaming Afghanistan. Let's face it; they were in Afghanistan before military forces were. They certainly didn't need our permission to go to Afghanistan, but they were restricted to certain areas.⁵⁷

Access: Delayed Response

As there were no troops on the ground, there were no opportunities to embed any media until six weeks later, around the 2001 Thanksgiving weekend.⁵⁸ This matter of security and practicality nevertheless created anxiety for each of the major news organizations, who were desperate for access to the military operation. In December 2001, Victoria Clarke, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, in an interview with Columbia Journalism Review, explained in terms of the non-conventional nature of the early phases of OEF. “Until recently,” she said, “all we had on the ground were Special Forces in small numbers. Their visibility would not have only done harm to their operational intent, it probably would have put their lives at risk.”⁵⁹

Once coalition forces had established a foothold in Afghanistan, DOD officials had to implement some means to facilitate media coverage of the story, which had unprecedented global interest following 11 September. As DOD developed a plan to grant reporters access to the battlefield, Clarke explained the restricted access policy early on:

We encouraged journalists to disabuse themselves of any notions that this would be like any previous conflicts--the Persian Gulf, for example, where you saw thousands of troops coursing across the desert. Also, given the fact that there was going to be a special, unique, and important role for Special Forces, there would be some things that nobody could or should ever see.⁶⁰

As combat operations progressed to include increased numbers of conventional forces on the ground, media were finally allowed into the battlefield with the first wave of marines.⁶¹ However, getting the reporters linked up with front line troops, where the story was, was especially problematic. In response, DOD rapidly embedded eight

reporters in various units during Operation Anaconda to offset the dearth of battlefield media coverage.⁶²

Battlefield Effects

The military did not facilitate the media well once access to the battlefield was eventually granted. Since it was essentially an afterthought, DOD could not effectively get reporters to the story when there was worldwide interest. The lack of comprehensive media planning resulted in significant criticism. Both Whitman and Clarke were lambasted by the media bureau chiefs for failing to get the media to the story. As it turns out, Navy and Marine Corps public affairs decided to embed reporters on their own. Although it was ad hoc and not sanctioned by DOD, the Army also started embedding by the time the 10th Mountain Division was in Afghanistan for Operation Anaconda. Thus, the embedding process actually saw its start in Afghanistan.⁶³

One incident which most certainly did not go right involved friendly- fire casualties near Kandahar, where several correspondents were physically locked in a warehouse by the military to prevent media coverage. This prompted Victoria Clarke to issue an apology to the media for “severe shortcomings” in the OEF media policy.⁶⁴

Outcome

Following Operation Desert Storm, the Pentagon had promised more open media coverage of major combat operations. When the US and coalition forces entered Afghanistan to search for Osama bin Laden and to defeat the Taliban, DOD reneged on its promise to the media.⁶⁵ In general terms, there was not a well-defined media policy in OEF and thus, it was ineffective. Planning for a complex military operation in a land-

locked country with limited basing facilities dominated the focus of Secretary Rumsfeld and General Franks, over any substantive concerns for media facilitation. Paul and Kim, in *Reporters on the Battlefield*, succinctly relate the difficulties of the operation:

Afghanistan was the first US military intervention waged against nonstate actors (Al Qaeda) and the regime that harbored them (Taliban). The restrictive press policy adopted in Afghanistan was partly the result of the nature of the operation: The engagement in Afghanistan was difficult for the press to cover simply because most of the ground elements of the campaign were special operations forces, which move rapidly and covertly over often very rugged terrain and make regular use of classified equipment or techniques, preventing reporters from covering their activities.⁶⁶

In fact, given the time and security concerns of an effective and decisive response in such a complex and inhospitable environment, it is not surprising media access and coverage was a liability in operational planning. However, Secretary Rumsfeld emphasized, during a press conference with news bureau chiefs in October 2002 that the resulting restrictions were not aimed at the media. He explained,

I think it would be not be an accurate description to suggest that there was a conscious effort to keep people out and not embedded in forces during that six-week period from October 7th, because our task was just getting a small handful of people embedded with the Northern Alliance, and there was a sufficiently small number that they were worried about their own security because we didn't know what was going to happen with these Northern Alliance people, and they certainly didn't have time to provide any force protection for anyone from the press.⁶⁷

General Franks elaborates on the media coverage during OEF: "One of the reasons the press coverage in Afghanistan had been so error-ridden and mediocre--and often anti-military in its bias--was that the journalists had been kept away from combat operations. Instead, they had to depend on leakers for their stories"⁶⁸ Victoria Clarke also acknowledged that DOD did not adequately meet the media's needs in OEF, stating, "I don't think I communicated clearly enough down the line to people on the ground in

Afghanistan and elsewhere what our intent is and what our expectations are in terms of handling the media.”⁶⁹ This is not unreasonable, given the pressure on the Bush administration to react quickly and decisively against the perpetrators of the 11 September attacks.

Clearly, successful military operations in Afghanistan came at the necessary expense of not facilitating the media. DOD media policy was inadequate and an afterthought, but understandably so, given the context of the emotion of the day. Clarke offers that there were some positive aspects of the media operations, noting “those elements of the war that could be covered were getting extensive coverage. The piece of it to which there was very little access--and that will probably be true going forward--is the covert activities, which is perfectly reasonable.”⁷⁰ As Clarke indicates, what got covered seemed to be covered well, but there was simply not enough to offset the speculation, misinformation and inaccuracy that resulted from the media not being granted sufficient coverage.⁷¹

Surprisingly, although the media was not satisfied with the restrictive access policy, they also did not seem to complain about it as much as previous operations and wars. As Paul and Kim suggest, the media’s dissatisfaction may well have been mitigated due to “the press’s interest in and concern for the events of 9/11 and other domestic issues.”⁷²

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Objectives and Desired Media Effects

As the United States moved closer to the possibility of an invasion of Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003, the suitability of press pools for media coverage was a pressing

concern for both DOD and the media outlets.⁷³ The general discontent over press pools and the restrictive access in Afghanistan threatened to deteriorate military-media relations once again. Victoria Clarke, during an October 2002 press conference, elaborated on the main press pool problem of “moving” media products from the field to the respective parent media organization, saying:

In the category of lessons learned from the Gulf War 11, 12 years ago, whatever, one was well, there was a pretty good effort made in terms of actually getting the media over there and in the right places, but there was a real drop-off and a failure on the part of helping get (the) product back.⁷⁴

She further elaborated on the conceptual differences from Desert Storm:

We are not taking the Persian Gulf public affairs plan off the shelf and just tweaking it. We’re trying to approach the world as we see it and make happen what we all want to make happen. It is in your [the media’s] interest to be out there getting as much news and information as possible about what might transpire, it’s in our interest.⁷⁵

Adding to the much publicized debate over the legitimacy of potential US military action in Iraq was Saddam Hussein’s particularly effective misinformation campaign in the media. As Ridge notes, “In Iraq, the Pentagon was seeking ways to mitigate Saddam Hussein’s decade of success with his constantly shifting campaign of denial, deception, and outright lies.”⁷⁶

It seemed certain that the US must not allow Saddam’s information minister, known as “Baghdad Bob,” to get the better of the media at a crucial period where world opinion would be critical. Victoria Clarke clarified this perspective, saying “It’s in our interest to let people see for themselves through the news media, the lies and deceptive tactics Saddam Hussein will use.”⁷⁷ Bryan Whitman, Clarke’s deputy for media operations, summarized the objectives of the media strategy as follows:

We wanted to neutralize the disinformation efforts of our adversaries. We wanted to build and maintain support for US policy as well as the global war on terrorism. We wanted to take offensive action to achieve information dominance. We wanted to be able to demonstrate the professionalism of the US military. And we wanted to build and maintain support, of course, for the war fighter out there on the ground.⁷⁸

Therefore, there emerged two key public affairs objectives during planning for Operation Iraqi Freedom: improve media access by a means other than the press pools, and counter Saddam's misinformation efforts.

Media Policy

In order to achieve these objectives, Clarke and Whitman envisioned using reporters embedded with operational units. Gay puts it this way: "If Saddam Hussein's regime was well practiced in the art of disinformation, then why not bring along independent observers as a countermeasure?"⁷⁹ Clarke and Whitman recognized that, with the advent of new technology, the media would endeavor to cover the conflict on their own, with or without permission.⁸⁰ In addition, placing reporters with units seemed the best way to overcome decades of perception that the media could not be trusted in this effort. With access to the battlefield, journalists could finally get wartime coverage that they felt DOD had never provided. In exchange for essentially full access, the media would have to agree to ground rules to protect operationally sensitive information.

Embedding media with operational units presented many risks and raised many questions. In order to try and anticipate all the second and third order effects (i.e. all the bad things that could happen) in implementing this policy, Whitman used his previous Army planning experience to war-game various scenarios involving embeds. The result was a more robust and realistic list of media ground rules to set the conditions for handling the media.⁸¹

On 10 February 2003, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld described the purpose of the embed policy in a message to the entire military.

The Department of Defense (DOD) policy on media coverage of future military operations is that media will have long-term, minimally restrictive access to US air, ground and naval forces through embedding. Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and in the years ahead. . . . *We need to tell the factual story - good or bad - before others seed the media with disinformation and distortions, as they most certainly will continue to do.* Our people in the field need to tell our story—*only commanders can ensure the media get to the story.*⁸² (emphasis mine)

Rumsfeld identifies a number of key aspects of the OIF media policy. Through “long-term, minimally restrictive access,” embedded media would have unprecedented coverage of US forces operating in the CENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR). He emphatically states the importance of allowing the media to report the facts of a story, whether the story is favorable or not. In doing so, he acknowledged the success of Saddam Hussein’s disinformation campaign to this point. Finally, he definitively put the burden on his military commanders to take responsibility for engaging and facilitating the media.

Control: Media Ground Rules

The most discernable policy mechanism for controlling the media during OIF was the media ground rules. Ground rules had been used as an effective substitute for censorship since Vietnam.⁸³ The OIF embedded reporter signed a contractual agreement with the US government in order to gain access to operating units. The embedded reporter agreed to:

Participate in the embedding process and to follow the direction and orders of the Government related to such participation. The media employee further agrees to follow Government regulations. The media employee acknowledges *that failure*

*to follow any direction, order, regulation, or ground rule may result in the termination of the media employee's participation in the embedding process.*⁸⁴
(emphasis mine)

In addition, the contract protected the government from lawsuits from the media. While facilitating media on the battlefield, many significant considerations emerge. In embedding a reporter, the military becomes responsible for, among other things, the reporter's protection and safety. Scenarios involving a reporter endangering himself to get a perceived "award-winning" photo or a journalist getting taken prisoner create potential headaches and distractions from military planning.⁸⁵ It was important to mitigate the potential liabilities from assuming responsibility for media facilitation. The contract, therefore, established that the military would not be held responsible for the death or personal injury of embeds due to "the extreme and unpredictable hazards of war, combat operations, and combat support operations."⁸⁶

The DOD media policy stated that media products would "not be subject to security review or censorship," except for coverage of specific items listed in Secretary Rumsfeld's ground rule message of 10 February 2003. These restricted items include elements that involved "sensitive information, including troop movements, battle preparations, materiel capabilities and vulnerabilities."⁸⁷ The rules also did not prohibit media access to classified or sensitive information on the battlefield, noting, "Security at the source will be the rule."⁸⁸

The specified responsibility here was upon the unit commander to both ensure access to the media to report events on the battlefield and maintain operational security. The unit commander was required to exercise broad discretion and judgment to ensure

that troops police themselves in accommodating the journalist covering a story while not compromising or endangering the mission and troops.

The rules established a framework for the military unit and the embedded media to discern what content was appropriate for release and what was not. Paragraph 4G of the SECDEF's message encompasses this framework:

When a commander or his/her designated representative has reason to believe that a media member will have access to this type of sensitive information, prior to allowing such access, he/she will take prudent precautions to ensure the security of that information. *The primary safeguard will be to brief media in advance about what information is sensitive and what the parameters are for covering this type of information.*

If media are inadvertently exposed to sensitive information they should be briefed after exposure on what information they should avoid covering. In instances where a unit commander or the designated representative determines that coverage of a story will involve exposure to sensitive information beyond the scope of what may be protected by prebriefing or debriefing, but coverage of which is in the best interests of the DOD, the commander may offer access if the reporter agrees to a security review of their coverage.

Agreement to security review in exchange for this type of access must be strictly voluntary and if the reporter does not agree, then access may not be granted. *If a security review is agreed to, it will not involve any editorial changes; it will be conducted solely to ensure that no sensitive or classified information is included in the product.*⁸⁹ (emphasis mine)

The ground rules of February 2003 represent a significant change in how the military controlled the media's access on the battlefield. In contrast to previous wars, the military would trust the embedded reporter access to observe operations of combat units, including classified and sensitive material. While not able to disclose material that could adversely affect operations, the embedded reporter was nevertheless privy to information in an unprecedented manner.

Integral to this approach was that the relationship would be cooperative and symbiotic. Reporters were expected to self-censor if they knew the content of what they were reporting would get people killed.⁹⁰ Thus, the ground rule construct required a

certain amount of trust between the military unit and reporter, to allow each to carry out its responsibilities while still abiding by the rules.

Control: Media Boot Camp

Another indirect means of implementing control of the media was an unofficial requirement for all embedded media to attend media boot camps in order to become familiar with and assimilate into the combat units. The week-long program covered a variety of military basic topics, and was taught at a variety of locations such as Norfolk and Quantico, Virginia, to Fort Dix, New Jersey, to Kuwait.⁹¹ Miracle explained the “news media boot camps helps embedded journalists develop a relationship with the military services and prepares them for the rigors of combat, including a possible exposure to biological or chemical weapons.” The realistic training was intended to offset the lack of combat experience for the majority of reporters who had not been in combat before OIF.⁹²

Access: “Long term, Minimally Restrictive”

In exchange for cooperating with the ground rules, the media went everywhere with their embedded units. In an unprecedented manner, reporters were able to see and experience what the troops did on the battlefield. They ate, slept, and traveled with their units. They were able to broadcast live in the midst of firefights and engagements. As Bryan Whitman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs puts it, “this unprecedented access was a double edged sword, as it would show the good, the bad, and the ugly of what was going on the battlefield.”⁹³

Author Karl Zinsmeister, for instance, was granted clearance, by the commanding general of the 82nd Airborne, to sit in on all of the daily Battle Update Briefs (BUBs, as they are called) at division, brigade and battalion levels as he desired. He was able to see intelligence estimates, mission planning and observe enemy and friendly troop dispositions.⁹⁴ He was able to hear and appreciate the thought process and decisions made by the 82nd's commanding general and the effects of the subsequent operations.

Once embedded, the reporters were obligated to stay with the unit for the duration of the conflict. A reporter could not leave the unit for a period and then come back later. Thus, if a reporter made the conscious decision to "disembed," the contractual obligation by the military to provide access, food, security, and transportation was over, and the reporter would be on his or her own.⁹⁵

Battlefield Effects

The "In-Bed" Issue (Lack of Journalist Objectivity)

One of the most compelling topics of discussion associated with the embedded media program has to do with the issue of reporter objectivity. When the idea of embedding was first announced by DOD, it was broadly criticized by many news commentators, media pundits, and journalism academics because they felt it would lead to a "Stockholm Syndrome" type relationship between the reporter and the soldiers he or she is assigned to.⁹⁶ This premise was such that the reporter's close proximity to combat units and reliance on the military for basic physiological needs (i.e. food, protection, shelter, acceptance) would lead to loss of journalistic impartiality and inability to carry out the necessary "watch dog" function. Many critics charged that the embeds would unwittingly become voice-pieces or cheerleaders for the military.

Many reporters who did embed were constantly apprehensive about being identified as part of the military. One *New York Times* reporter was captured in a photograph while participating in one of the media boot camps at Fort Benning, Georgia. While exposed to tear gas in a gas chamber drill designed to teach the media to don protective masks and suits in the event of a WMD attack, the reporter was photographed with tears in his eyes from the tear gas. The reporter was adamant that the photographer keep his name and his newspaper out of the photo caption as he “didn’t want it known, either in the Ft. Benning area or internationally should the photo get wider distribution, that the possibility existed that he might be an embedded journalist.”⁹⁷ Ironically, the reporter was, in effect, trying to censor another journalist’s work to protect his identity as an embed.

Some battlefield reporters decided to eschew the embedding option. Lara Logan, of CBS News, chose to forgo the opportunity, expressing the opinions of many such unilaterals: “It’s hugely important that there are independent outside witnesses to what happened in a situation so that you don’t have the US military or the Iraqis putting out their own side.”⁹⁸ Logan represents the perspective that embedding would make the journalist too close to the troops, and thus present an overly favorable view of the US operations.⁹⁹

If the media organization did not like the rules and felt that it amounted to censorship, then they did not have to embed with the military. But some organizations signed on anyway, so as to not be left out. As Geert Linnebank, the editor of *Reuters* who was openly suspicious of the embed plan, noted in an op-ed in the *USA Today* that, “(i)n the end, the reality was that you either accepted the deal or you missed the action. So we

bought in, but with the understanding that some of our reporters would be used by the Pentagon to cast the war in a favorable light, and that we would have to take steps to offset that fact.”¹⁰⁰

Finally, despite much debate and analysis, the controversy on embedded media objectivity remains a dichotomy of sorts. Yes, the reporters naturally would tend to lose their objectivity, but this is unavoidable in the context of war. The urge to live often overwhelmed the urge to be an objective journalist. Reporters who recognized that they were “targets,” along with the troops they were embedded with, suddenly had no compunction, for example, to point out an Iraqi sniper position to US gunners to save their own lives. *Boston Herald* embedded reporter Jules Crittendon described how the more basic need for self-preservation overrides objectivity on the battlefield:

Some in our profession might think as a reporter and noncombatant, I was there only to observe. Now that I have assisted in the deaths of three human beings in the war I was sent to cover, I’m sure there are some people who will question my ethics, my objectivity, etc. I’ll keep the argument short. Screw them, they weren’t there. But they are welcome to join me next time if they care to test their professionalism.¹⁰¹

Crittenden’s account is honest and to the point. It highlights the human element that cannot be compartmentalized when faced with life and death battlefield realities, and from which no reporters are exempt.

The “Soda Straw” Effect

One catch phrase that emerged with embedded media coverage of OIF was the term “soda straw,” which indicated media reports that were high in visual appeal and dramatic detail, but lacking in context, perspective or scrutiny. Media pundits and armchair generals in the studio often tried to explain how an embedded reporter’s live

report fit into a larger understanding of the operation, often without success. Thus, the embedded media's own reports were criticized and marginalized by the same organization that demanded access to the battlefield in the first place.

One aspect of the embedding process was that it resembled a lottery in that it tended to be the "luck of the draw" with regard to where an embed might be assigned, and thus, what he or she might see and be able to report. Being assigned to a frontline combat unit did not guarantee the reporter Pulitzer Prize material or a Joe Galloway-style, Ia Drang-type fire fight. *CBS Evening News* correspondent Jim Axelrod, assigned to the 1st BCT (Brigade Combat Team) of the 3rd Infantry Division (3rd ID), describes what he reported on:

What happened to me and my combat photographer Mario de Carvalho, was as much as dumb luck as anything else. We so happened to be assigned to a brigade of the Third Infantry that was first across the berms and were the tip of the spear.

You have to understand that we were living this sort of very narrow slice of the war, so I didn't have a great sense of the big picture. I still haven't seen a lick of video; I haven't seen a frame of what we produced. . . .

As part of the First Brigade combat team, I had an opportunity to document most of the killing, but most of the shelling was done long-distance by multiple-launch rocket launch systems. These guns could fire several miles and by the next morning, the combat brigade might be on the move, so it was not the kind of combat that was being done in close hand-to-hand situations. There was never any opportunity, or attempt to limit the pictures we took and fed to New York or to London. If we found bodies we would photograph them. But a lot of killing was done out of camera's range.¹⁰²

Axelrod likewise is describing his own limited soda straw perspective as the 3rd ID moved towards Baghdad. Much of what was reported was merely a series of images and audio reports that the reporters themselves could not collate into a larger perspective in their dispatches. It also highlights the media's emerging desire for their own transportation on the battlefield, so they could follow up on stories of interest.

General Tommy Franks also explained his awareness of the difficulties the embedded reporters were having in piecing together a larger picture of how the war was going.

The embedded reporters covering the war had no Blue Force Tracker to help them grasp the broad success of our troops. They were unable to watch the Coalition's steady progress, with units racing ahead to their objectives and across phase lines ahead of the plan's schedule.¹⁰³

As mentioned, the embedded reporters started to blame their inability to report on casualties or other developing stories on the restriction which prevented the media from having their own vehicles.¹⁰⁴ The lack of mobility of the embedded reporters, who were linked to their combat units for food, security and transportation, most certainly contributed to the soda-straw effect. As Axelrod notes, the frenetic movement of the combat units often did not allow for the journalists to stop, investigate and get the full story. As the troops moved, so did the reporters. Dan Dahler of ABC News, embedded with the 101st Airborne Division and the Stryker BCT, 2nd ID, elaborates, "When stories were tantalizing close, you couldn't get to them, like a village where you really wanted to go back and find out what the experience of the people was."¹⁰⁵

As the embedded reports and dispatches were passed on to the parent media organizations and transmitted to the viewing public, the soda straw news items became fodder for network news pundits and commentators. The resulting broad speculation on these single hits of information created problems all the way to Secretary Rumsfeld and the Pentagon briefers as they also struggled to put discrete reported items into a broader context. Rumsfeld spent a significant amount of time in March 2003 at the podium "debunking" many of the stories, and appealing to the American public to have faith in

the Pentagon's assessments of the war, noting "mood swings in the media from highs to lows to highs and back again, sometimes in a single 24-hour period."¹⁰⁶

However, it appears that some media outlets themselves recognized the limitations of the embedded reporting and understood that the lack of perspective was many times unavoidable. Fox News' Shepard Smith, who was often the recipient of numerous live embed reports from Iraq commented on this deficiency:

We haven't been able to get our hands around the big picture. It hasn't been accessible. But I don't think personally that's because of the Pentagon. This thing is happening 6,000 miles away in the middle of the desert.

Some people who analyze TV and analyze war have decided there are facts we're not getting by Pentagon design. I do not believe that. Why would they not tell us what's going on? The theory is they don't want bad info out; they want only good information out.

I think what they want is right information out. You can deal with information as long as you're sure of the facts. I don't think we're always sure on a real-time basis.¹⁰⁷

The military plays a role in providing this context and perspective, counters Bryan Whitman. He contends that the high-level briefings by the Pentagon, CENTCOM, and the CFLCC provide perspectives by filling in the gaps and allowing reporters to ask officials to explain the particulars of what has been reported by embedded media. He feels that the soda straw effect is just the nature of the reporting beast and can be mitigated by commanders if they focus on getting the facts out.¹⁰⁸

Outcome

There were two major objectives DOD sought to accomplish with the embedded media program: improve media access, and counter Saddam's misinformation efforts. By all accounts, it appears the embedded media was effective in achieving these objectives.

Victoria Clarke, who along with Bryan Whitman conceived the policy, evaluated it this way:

It demonstrated in such a real and compelling fashion the professionalism and the dedication and the compassion of these young men and women who serve and put their lives at risk. That was an important objective.

One of the ways to achieve your military objectives is to build and maintain support for the US military. And showing how superbly they performed is part of that. So that was one primary objective.

And, two, blunting and neutralizing the lies and deception and disinformation put out by the Iraqi regime was important. And we did that to a large extent.¹⁰⁹

Whitman went on to say that the major lesson of the embed program, “is that the military and the media can work together on a large scale in a framework that allows each of them to accomplish their professional goals.”¹¹⁰

With adequate ground rules in effect, reporters/journalists can be trusted with access to classified information. The responsibility for fostering and nurturing this trust between reporters and the embedding unit belongs to the unit commander. In OIF, the journalist, while not able to report on what he or she had observed, nevertheless was able to see and appreciate the operation from the commander’s perspective. Thus, the embedded journalist was able to gain insight into the purpose of what the unit was doing.

Refuting Saddam’s misinformation

The presence of embedded reporters on the battlefield was critical in refuting Saddam’s disinformation in real time. Victoria Clarke noted during a press briefing that having reporters along on the battlefield is the best way to ensure the facts are covered. She said, “Transparency works. The good news gets out. The bad news gets dealt with quickly.”¹¹¹ Journalist Karl Zinsmeister, who was embedded with the 82nd Airborne, observed Patriot missiles defeat Iraqi Scud missile launches against US forces on the

ground. In his book *Boots on the Ground*, Zinsmeister talks about a weapon system

Saddam denied having:

Intermediate range ballistic missiles are . . . one of the weapons that, just weeks ago, he [Saddam Hussein] swore on a stack of Holy Korans he didn't have. They are one of the weapons U.N. inspectors told us they saw no signs of. They are one of the weapons that Security Council opponents of the United States sniffed that Iraq was now unlikely to possess.

So: On the first day of hostilities, Saddam Hussein revealed himself (once again) to be a liar.¹¹²

This is an interesting comment by Zinsmeister in that he mistakenly identifies the Iraqi Scud missile, which had a max range of 800 kilometers, as an intermediate range ballistic missile, which is typically defined in the 2750 to 5500 kilometer range. This is a technical point, but one that undermines his accuracy in relating the incident. Nevertheless, Zinsmeister correctly addresses the disparity in Saddam's prewar comments.

The media showed many of the Iraqi assertions about the progress of the war were false. Iraqi television claimed the Coalition forces were "roasting their stomachs at the gates (of Baghdad) and committing suicide" rather than face the Iraqi army, only to have CNN broadcast live images of the 3rd ID inside of Saddam's presidential palace in downtown Baghdad."¹¹³ The media reported on the tactics the Fedayeen were using to combat US forces, such as: using women and children as shields; using mosques, hospitals, and schools as ammunition and weapons caches; and making false war crimes accusations.¹¹⁴ Another compelling example involves an al-Jazeera embedded reporter, Amr El-Kakhy. El-Kakhy, embedded with US Marines, reported from the north Arabian Gulf port of Umm Qasr at the same time Baghdad was reporting that the port was successfully being defended from American forces.¹¹⁵

As Clarke suggests, this is not to say that the embedded media would not, or did not, report bad news. One of the more controversial stories from the battlefield came from the *New York Times* on Saturday, March 29, 2003. Dexter Filkins, embedded with the Fifth Marine Regiment in Iwaniya, Iraq, filed an article where he interviewed a Marine sharpshooter, Sgt. Eric Schrumpf, who elaborated on the Marines' progress. Sgt. Schrumpf was quoted as follows: "We had a great day. We killed a lot of people."

Later in the article, while explaining the Saddam Fedayeen tactic of using human shields, Schrumpf related an incident where an Iraqi woman was shot standing near an Iraqi soldier. "I'm sorry, but the chick was in the way," Schrumpf told Filkins, who noted the comments in the article.¹¹⁶ The "chick was in the way" quote was a lightning rod for criticism of the US military in both the American and international press, particularly the Arab media, who exploited the insensitive words and tone to feed the notion that the US forces were targeting civilians.

Yet, there may be a silver lining in media coverage of "bad" stories. When soldiers make mistakes, the embedded reporters often mitigated the negative aspects of the report by capturing the intangibles, such as grief and remorse, that the soldiers displayed immediately afterwards. The net effect of reporting of this nature was increased credibility for the embedded media in covering difficult and sensitive circumstances.

Major David Connolly, who was the CLFCC Media Officer during OIF, relates an incident where a CNN reporter was ostracized while attempting to cover civilian casualties caused by fires from US and British forces near Umm Qasr. He explains how allowing the reporter to film the incident had other positive effects. "The images of the

Soldier's faces told the story," he relates. "They were concerned that they had injured innocent civilians on the battlefield. The film showed the primary concern at that point was to provide medical attention--the same care we would have given to a Coalition soldier."¹¹⁷

William Branigin, of the *Washington Post*, similarly reported a roadblock incident where several Iraqi civilians were killed when they failed to stop after repeated warnings. Branigin reported the story but also carefully related the remorse of the soldiers involved.¹¹⁸ These incidents suggest that even when the embedded reporter covers the ugly mistakes of war, he or she can also put a human face on the both sides of the tragedy and mitigate its impact by portraying the reality of individual soldiers having to cope.

Despite these difficulties, the total effect of embedded media reporting was not all bad. The reporting from the battlefield tended to be overall positive for the war effort, supported by strong public approval ratings of the war.¹¹⁹

Improving Media Access and OPSEC

Before OIF, one of the main problems preventing the military from granting the media greater access to the battlefield was distrust. The premise was that the media could not be trusted with operationally sensitive information that greater access would provide. Indeed, the entire purpose of the DOD media ground rules was to maintain operational security (OPSEC) in order to prevent the compromise of ongoing combat operations by embedded reporters. Ironically, in this capacity, the DOD media policy was highly successful as it demonstrated reporters could be trusted with sensitive information.

Whitman elaborates:

Quite frankly, I've never met a reporter who has ever intentionally or willfully compromised one of our US military missions. It's just not in their nature. They don't want to do that. Furthermore, it's inconceivable that they'd want to compromise a mission they're actually a part of. They'd be endangering their own lives.¹²⁰

As Whitman indicates, there were relatively few instances where reporters were removed from the battlefield for not following the established ground rules. One CFLCC official estimated there that approximately 25 reporters were removed, a combination of both embedded and unilateral reporters.¹²¹ One example involved the 1st Marine Division, who removed *Christian Science Monitor* reporter Phil Smucker for disclosing details in broadcast interviews about the unit's location.¹²²

The most well-known OPSEC incident involved Fox News' reporter Geraldo Rivera, who was pulled from his assignment with the 101st Airborne Division after sketching a map in the sand describing the action he has seen.¹²³ What is not commonly known about this incident was that Rivera was not embedded; rather, he was a unilateral reporter during OIF. Unfortunately for Rivera, who was popular with the troops, he was widely criticized for potentially endangering the unit. In addition, FOX News pulled him from the region in an effort to distance itself from the possibility of having a scandal not unlike that of NBC's Peter Arnett, who criticized the US-led coalition on Iraqi state television only two days before.¹²⁴

Aside from these incidents, OPSEC was not a problem with the embedded media. Most disagreements were related to next-of-kin notification issues associated with images of dead US soldiers on the battlefield, and were resolved fairly easily.¹²⁵ In fact, many reporters and their parent outlets seemed to completely embrace the concept and necessity of maintaining operational security. As the Army Chief of Public Affairs,

Brigadier General Robert Gaylord notes, the reporters policed themselves, which created, “the benefit of having a reporter who even himself said, “I can’t tell you where we are because of operation security . . .” as opposed to saying, “the military won’t allow us to tell you.”¹²⁶ A 2003 military-media conference concluded that “despite all the unprecedented access--or perhaps because of it--operational security wasn’t breached by having reporters there.”¹²⁷

In those areas where the sensitive content was required to be screened, it was left to the unit commander, and his Public Affairs staff, to resolve the issue with the reporter. CBS News’s Jim Axelrod, embedded with the 1st Brigade, 3rd ID, commented on this interaction, relating how “there have been moments of disagreement, but there is always discussion,” between the journalist and the unit.¹²⁸ This underscores the reality that the ground rules cover many specifics on what can and cannot be reported on, but the inevitable gray areas require patience, understanding and dialogue between reporter and unit to resolve the issue. This interaction is the key element in ensuring OPSEC constraints do not derail the embedding process.

Another media concern related to OPSEC was that the embedding process would cause or allow the military to censor bad stories, that is, limit reporting of information that was unflattering or unfavorable. This notion was flawed. OPSEC requirements often precluded releasing positive information. For example, the media began to speculate that the Saddam Fedayeen were getting the best of American and coalition forces in March 2003¹²⁹. General Tommy Franks kept his public affairs personnel quiet rather than disclose US capabilities and successes in dealing with the Fedayeen. General Franks, in his book *American Soldier*, relates his response to a request from his public affairs

director, CENTCOM Director of Strategic Communications Jim Wilkinson, to release any information to offset the media chatter:

“Jeez, General,” Jim Wilkerson complained one day, “the public is going to think we’re powerless to counter these Fedayeen attacks. Can’t we show them some video of the JDAMs [Joint Direct Attack Munition] smashing into the Baath headquarters in a couple of these towns?”

“We *could* (emphasis in original) do that, Jim,” I replied, “but we’re not going to. . . .”

. . . I knew how frustrating his job was becoming: We were winning the war, but he could hardly say anything about it.

“I’ll tell you why that’s a bad idea,” I continued. “First, we don’t want to tip our hand on our tactics. . . .”

“And second,” I said, “those first couple of days, you and [Brigadier General] Vince [Brooks, CENTCOM Deputy Director of Operations] showed some video of PGMs hitting aim points, and it was exactly the right thing to do. But Al-Jazeera and Al Arabia TV would eat us alive on the Arab street if we did that every day--if we fed the media a steady diet of (munitions) blowing away tanks and killing Iraqis. The enemy knows we’re kicking his (expletive deleted). In a week or so, the whole world will know it.”¹³⁰

General Frank’s account gives some insight into the commander’s thought process in exerting a high degree of control over the information that was made available to the media. Franks clearly refrains from releasing information which could have offset or mitigated the limited, “soda-straw” reports the media was reporting when the Fedayeen first made an appearance as US forces were pushing towards Baghdad.

Effectiveness of OIF DOD media policy

Following the Model for Evaluating Effectiveness of Media Policy, which was defined in chapter 3, it is possible to assess the effectiveness of the embedded media program in a comparative manner in table 2.

Table 2. DOD Media Policy Parameters by US Military Operation				
Operation	Desired Media	Level of	Level of	Effective?

	Effect	control	access	
Desert Storm	Improvement media facilitation by use of press pools	High; DOD national press pool; security review	Low; despite 1200 media, only 187 in press pool. Nature/quality/timeliness of reporting	Not effective
Restore Hope	Not defined; OOTW/ humanitarian action	Low; insufficient PA assets in Somalia	High; unrestrained	Not effective
Enduring Freedom	Not defined	High; restrictive: press pools, unilaterals, embeds	Low; Delayed policy response	Not effective
Iraqi Freedom	1. improve media access 2. counter Iraqi disinformation campaign	Medium: Ground rules, Media boot camps,	High: “long term; minimally restrictive”	Effective

In Desert Storm, despite a clearly defined media policy, press pools were not an effective means to facilitate the media and did not improve media relations. The media did not have adequate access to the battlefield due to poor logistical planning and inadequate technical support from the military.

Both Somalia and Enduring Freedom were ineffective with regard to media facilitation, primarily since there were no specific media policy objectives defined. The humanitarian nature of Somalia and the secretive nature of Enduring Freedom led to an absence of media planning, which in turn led to unsatisfactory results. It is interesting to note that the media, in general, had no problem with Somalia, owing to the completely unrestricted and uncontrolled access they enjoyed there.

OIF had a media policy with clearly defined objectives and the adequate levels of control and access. The DOD media ground rules were sufficient to prevent OPSEC violations by embedded reporters, while the media boot camps allowed for embedded

reporters to better integrate into their assigned units. As has been discussed, the key to achieving the media objectives was sufficient prior planning and active involvement by senior leadership to create an environment of trust with the embedded media. While the program was not without its problems, it successfully reestablished a working relationship between military and media while allowing each to fulfill its responsibilities.

OIF Lessons Learned

One of the main lessons of the embedded media program in OIF is that the military and media can co-exist on the battlefield and achieve their different but inter-related objectives. One of the architects of the program, Bryan Whitman commented on this, stating, “The ‘overarching lesson’ of the embed program is that the media and military can work together on a large scale in a framework that allows each of them to accomplish their professional goals.”¹³¹

One necessary element to a successful embedded media operation is a high level of trust between the embedded reporter and the unit commander.¹³² The unit commander’s involvement, from setting a cooperative tone for the unit when the embed is processed in, to ensuring “security at the source” with respect to access granted, makes the difference in getting a true and accurate depiction by the journalist. It highlights the operational and strategic significance of everything that the media may observe on the battlefield. Truthful, accurate reporting by embedded media is essential to securing and maintaining viable public support at home during combat operations.

One prewar concern by the media was whether the embed program would amount to censorship. CBS News anchorman Dan Rather encapsulated this view, noting, “I have trepidations. There’s a pretty fine line between being embedded and being entombed.”¹³³

This concern that the ground rules and unit commanders would keep the media from telling the real story was folly. Those in the media establishment who were openly cynical of the military's motives with embed process had to admit otherwise.

Geert Linnebank, *Reuters* editor in chief, wary that embedding would be used to control media coverage, noted in an op-ed that, "The Pentagon is quite candid in seeing embedding as a way to help "shape" public perception. So far in the Iraq war, that has not spelled censorship."¹³⁴ Even Dan Rather begrudgingly made the following concession after the first reports were coming in, "I repeat for emphasis, it wasn't perfect . . . ; in some cases [they] embedded people, but they didn't let them up with the far-forward units. But there's [little] to complain about, and there's a lot to applaud."¹³⁵ On this aspect alone, the embed program was a success.

As was the case in Desert Storm, the Marine Corps once again enjoyed successful media relations, taking a proactive and assertive approach to engaging the media to get the Marine story out. While processing embeds into their units in Kuwait City in March 2003, the 1st Marine Division public affairs reinforced the notion to the unit commanders and the units that the "media were not to be 'escorted,' they were to be 'adopted' and made members of the Division family."¹³⁶ This positive and accommodating attitude certainly was an enabler to facilitating the media and rapidly assimilating them into the ranks.

The key to success in the embed program was early and comprehensive planning for the media. Unlike past military conflicts, the Pentagon planned for media facilitation from the beginning, not after the mission operation order was already written. As Whitman relates, "Gone are the days where the war plan is developed independent of

public affairs.”¹³⁷ It is essential that the military commander “control the battlespace,” to include the media. Accordingly, military planners must “take media needs into consideration from the start and find ways to accommodate them.”¹³⁸ Miracle, in an article for *Military Review* entitled “The army and embedded media,” succinctly describes this requirement for the Army:

Army leaders must include media operations during the earliest stages of war planning. Logistics planners must include public affairs operations and post-conflict media support in the process. PAOs need sufficient means of transportation, communications gear, and competent personnel for escort duty.¹³⁹

Military planners must comprehensively plan for the media in the same manner that resources are allotted for any other battlefield operating system.

Summary

The research methodology in Chapter Three had two secondary questions. The first question was “Was the DOD embedded media program during Operation Iraqi Freedom effective?” The second question asked, “Were there lessons learned, and if so, were the recommendations realistic and achievable?”

By all accounts, the embedded media program was a success and was very effective in meeting the DOD media policy objectives that were defined by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. Nye succinctly describes this success as “soft power”:

One instructive use of soft power that the Pentagon got right in the Second Gulf War has been called the “weaponization of reporters.” Embedding reporters with forward military units undercut Saddam’s strategy of creating international outrage by claiming that US troops were deliberately killing civilians. Whereas CNN framed the issues in the first Gulf War, the diffusion of information technology and the rise of new outlets such as al Jazeera in the intervening decade required a new strategy for maintaining soft power during the second. Whatever

other issues, it raises, embedding reporters in frontline units was a rise response to changing times.¹⁴⁰

By engendering a positive relationship with the media and finding an effective means to refute Saddam Hussein's disinformation campaign, the military utilized "soft power," as Nye puts it, in addition to lethal effects in its operations.

There were realistic and cogent lessons learned captured by the military that provide a basis for improving the embedding process in future conflicts. Certainly, the most important lesson is the necessity of early and comprehensive planning for media facilitation. Issues such as the media ground rules, the role of unilateral reporters, and allowing media to have their own vehicles on the battlefield all provide areas for change, improvement and/or future deliberation between the military and the media. In short, the recommended changes and improvements are achievable by adjusting the mechanics of the program to policy objectives associated with future conflicts. As the embedding process itself reflects an evolutionary change in military-media relations, the future may require operational planning that implements a hybrid of these recommended changes and lessons learned.

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¹¹⁸Ridge.

¹¹⁹Wiseman.

¹²⁰Katovsky, 206.

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¹²²Bill Lambrecht, "Best and worst of having journalists embedded with the military," *Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*, 4 March 2003; (accessed 10 October 2004); available from <http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc3.asp?DOCID=1G1:99640506&num=1&ctrlInfo=Round91%3AProd%3ASR%3AResult&ao=>; Internet.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Robert Gaylord, interview by author, tape recording, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 16 September 2004.

¹²⁵Whitman.

¹²⁶Gaylord.

¹²⁷Shepard, 46.

¹²⁸Allison Romano, "Embeds, 'unilaterals' learning to survive. (Top of the Week). (embedded reporters work to cover the war in Iraq)," *Broadcasting & Cable*, 31 March 2003; (accessed 10 October 2004); available from <http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc3.asp?DOCID=1G1:99618562&num=6&ctrlInfo=Round91%3AProd%3ASR%3AResult&ao=1>; Internet.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to evaluate whether the successes of the embedded media program in Operation Iraqi Freedom make it a model for future conflicts. Chapter Four answered two secondary questions as defined in the Research Methodology. First, the research determined that the embedded media program in OIF was effective in accomplishing its stated objectives, while examining the manner in which it did so. Next, since the program was in fact effective and valid, the research determined whether there was room for improvement, in the context of its applicability to future conflicts. Several cogent and relevant issues must be addressed in order to make the product suitable in the future.

This research concludes that the suitability of the embedded media program in future conflicts is dependent on the nature of the conflict, despite the fact that both the public and the media have come to expect the level of battlefield access that embedding media provides. In the same manner as no two wars or conflicts are identical, neither will the next version of embedded media. As Somalia and OEF showed, embedding may either not be a consideration initially or a reasonable means to facilitate the media's coverage of ground combat. Brigadier General Robert Gaylord, Chief of Army Public Affairs, described the process of embedding media as an "evolutionary process" based on the experiences of both the media and the military, as well as the contemporary operating environment of the day.¹

Overall, the research highlights the importance of planning at the highest levels for media facilitation. This is important because what the media reports can impact the

strategic level of warfighting. Hulme's research in 2001, which evaluated the effect of media on foreign policy, concluded that the media indeed can effectively influence its audience with regard to foreign policy, although the extent to which it can do so is not readily quantifiable.² This theory seems validated in the case of embedded media in OIF. The embedded media increased public support for the portion of the war (that is, Phase III) that it predominately covered. The program was well-planned and orchestrated and, in turn, produced satisfactory results, although it is difficult to quantify how satisfactory.

Other Major Research Conclusions

This successful program fostered a spirit of cooperation between both the media and military as they recounted and evaluated their experiences on the battlefield, leading to a number of conferences and workshops that focused on the embedded media program during OIF. These forums usually involved bringing a mix of DOD policymakers, military commanders and public affairs experts, and the embedded media and journalists together in an effort to assess its effectiveness and discuss its role in the future.

The McCormick Tribune Foundation held a conference in April 2003, *Narrowing the Gap: Military, Media and the Iraq War*, just one month after Operation Iraqi Freedom started. The conference determined that the embedded media program was an unqualified success, notably by providing the American public a "front seat" on the war while accomplishing the goals of both the military and the media. The participants overwhelmingly felt that the program had done much to improve military-media relations. For all its successes, the conference attendees concluded that the embedding "had been overemphasized and it is not the final mold for covering future conflicts." Among the items they felt needed to be addressed in the future were facilitating the

unilateral reporters, allowing journalists to bring their own vehicles to the battlefield, and more liberal ground rules.³

The US Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership hosted a workshop, *Reporters on the Ground: The Military and the Media's Joint Experience During Operation Iraqi Freedom*, in September 2003 at the Army's Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. After evaluating many of the distinct embed issues (ground rules, objectivity, etc), the workshop's tactical panel "was almost in universal agreement that the embedded reporter model is the way to cover future conflicts."⁴ The workshop's operational panel concluded that embedded reporters "helped balance 'good' and 'bad' news." The "futures" panel concluded that "in the future all media, whether embedded or unilateral, will need their own transportation and communications systems," addressing the media criticism that the reporters could not follow-up on developing stories because they relied on the embedding unit for transportation and technical support. Interestingly, the workshop participants, both military and media, concluded the list of media ground rules, issued by Secretary Rumsfeld, were "too long" to be of practical use, suggesting the details could be worked out on the ground between unit commanders, public affairs officers, and the embedded reporter.⁵

Finally, of particular interest, is the RAND Corporation's comprehensive research effort, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context*. This research concludes "that the embedded press system is, in general, likely to produce the greatest number of the most positive outcomes for press-military relations." However, it hastens to add the military-media relationship is dependent on numerous factors and

qualifies its favorable assessment by stating that the embedded press system is not “to be considered a “sure winner” in all future conflicts.”⁶

Recommendations for Future Research

Media coverage became negative and much more critical during post-hostilities (Phase IV), which once again highlights the changing nature of the conflict in Iraq. Disembedding by reporters was not anticipated. The loss of embedded reporters translated to a significant lack of coverage. About this time, public support began to wane as the coalition dealt with the difficulties of fighting the insurgency and reestablishing services and governance in Iraq. DOD media policy did not anticipate or address the importance or need to keep media in close proximity after Baghdad fell. Future research could evaluate the potential impact on public opinion and US policy had the military been able to prevent the mass exodus of embedded reporters after the fall of Baghdad.

Future research needs to evaluate the demands by the media for their own vehicles on the battlefield. This is an oft-repeated theme in many analyses and raises many issues for the military. The proponents for media vehicles claim it will allow the embedded reporter to follow through on missed stories and gain greater perspective to expand beyond the limited soda straw coverage. An in depth examination of this issue could examine the issue in terms of practicality and feasibility, such as vehicle maintenance and repair, as well as impact upon operations, OPSEC, and the unit’s contractual obligation to provide security to the embed.

One possible consideration is how to anticipate and best utilize the inevitable unilateral reporter. Miracle notes, “In addition to the embedded media program, Army PAOs and escort officers must be equipped to support the hundreds of journalists who

operate unilaterally during military operations.”⁷ The unilateral, which operated outside of the sphere of control created with the embed policy, nevertheless will remain a constant factor on the battlefield, whether the military chooses to ignore it or not. While the embedded media policy may be an effective mechanism to sustain public support during protracted combat operations, DOD would be well served to expand its media facilitation policy to accommodate the unilateral reporter, in some manner.

Another factor to consider is how the embedded media program might have fared had the Phase III major combat operations not been successful. In evaluating the military-media relationship between World War II and Vietnam, Porch relates, “The difference . . . was not the presence of censorship but the absence of victory. In other conflicts, victory has erased memories of a troubled relationship; after Vietnam, the media was caught up in the quest for a scapegoat.”⁸ This is a compelling research conjecture- envisioning an embedded media program in a war that America does not win.

This is an effect that the DOD may not have contemplated. The embedded media program may well be a double-edged sword that rewards victory and punishes defeat. This is all the more compelling since there seems to be overwhelming consensus that the embedded media is here to stay, despite continuing debate over America’s role and responsibilities in an uncertain, increasing interconnected and interdependent world, and enduring challenges in the military-media relationship. Porch notes:

Future trends are likely to make military-media relations more, rather than less, difficult. An increase in humanitarian operations, the reliance on air campaigns and stand-off weapons, the difficulties of covering a “terrorist war,” the emergence of “information operations,” and changes in the media environment pose severe challenges. Nevertheless, the two institutions must recognize that it is in the interests of both to make the relationship work.⁹

Brendan McLane, in an article for *Parameters* entitled “Reporting from the sandstorm: an appraisal of embedding,” suggests that greater military-media cooperation after OIF can be brought about by “granting selected journalists access to the operational planning and execution of the next war.”¹⁰ This is a compelling notion, save the obvious operational security concerns it raises. It represents that military-media relations have improved to the point that such a recommendation, which would have been difficult to contemplate just a few years ago, is conceivable for academic debate in the one of the Army’s professional journals.

¹Robert Gaylord, interview by author, tape recording, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 16 September 2004.

²Simon Hulme, “The Modern Media: The Impact of Foreign Policy,” (MMAS Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 2001), 89-90.

³Alicia C. Shepard, *Narrowing the Gap: Military, Media and the Iraq War*. (Chicago: McCormick Tribune Foundation, 2004), 58-83.

⁴Michael Pasquarett, *Reporters on the Ground: the Military and the Media’s Joint Experience during Iraqi Freedom* [Document online] (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Center for Strategic Leadership, U. S. Army War College, October 2003); (accessed 10 October 2004); available from <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usacsl/Publications/CSL%20Issue%20Paper%208-03.pdf>; Internet.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation. 2004), 108.

⁷Tammy Miracle, “The army and embedded media,” *Military Review* (September 2003); (accessed 10 October 2004); available at <http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc3.asp?DOCID=1G1:111573648&num=1&ctrlInfo=Round91%3AProd%3ASR%3AResult&ao=1>; Internet.

⁸Douglas Porch, “No Bad Stories,” *Naval War College Review* 55, no. 1 (winter 2002): 86.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Brendan R. McLane, "Reporting from the sandstorm: an appraisal of embedding," *Parameters* (22 March 2004); (accessed 10 Oct 04); available at <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/04spring/mclane.htm>; Internet.

APPENDIX A

DOD EMBEDDED MEDIA GROUND RULES

(Excerpt from SECDEF message DTG 101900ZFEB03)

4. Ground rules. For the safety and security of US forces and embedded media, media will adhere to established ground rules. Ground rules will be agreed to in advance and signed by media prior to embedding. Violation of the ground rules may result in the immediate termination of the embed and removal from the AOR. These ground rules recognize the right of the media to cover military operations and are in no way intended to prevent release of derogatory, embarrassing, negative or uncomplimentary information. Any modification to the standard ground rules will be forwarded through the PA channels to CENTCOM/PA for approval. Standard ground rules are:

4.A. All interviews with service members will be on the record. Security at the source is the policy. Interviews with pilots and aircrew members are authorized upon completion of missions; however, release of information must conform to these media ground rules.

4.B. Print or broadcast stories will be datelined according to local ground rules. Local ground rules will be coordinated through command channels with CENTCOM.

4.C. Media embedded with US forces are not permitted to carry personal firearms.

4.D. Light discipline restrictions will be followed. Visible light sources, including flash or television lights, flash cameras will not be used when operating with forces at night unless specifically approved in advance by the on-scene commander.

4.E. Embargoes may be imposed to protect operational security. Embargoes will only be used for operational security and will be lifted as soon as the operational security issue has passed.

4.F. The following categories of information are releasable.

4.F.1. Approximate friendly force strength figures.

4.F.2. Approximate friendly casualty figures by service. Embedded media may, within OPSEC limits, confirm unit casualties they have witnessed.

4.F.3. Confirmed figures of enemy personnel detained or captured.

4.F.4. Size of friendly force participating in an action or operation can be disclosed using approximate terms. Specific force or unit identification may be released when it no longer warrants security protection.

4.F.5. Information and location of military targets and objectives previously under attack.

4.F.6. Generic description of origin of air operations, such as "land-based."

4.F.7. Date, time or location of previous conventional military missions and actions, as well as mission results are releasable only if described in general terms.

4.F.8. Types of ordnance expended in general terms.

4.F.9. Number of aerial combat or reconnaissance missions or sorties flown in centcom's area of operation.

4.F.10. Type of forces involved (e.g., air defense, infantry, armor, marines).

4.F.11. Allied participation by type of operation (ships, aircraft, ground units, etc.). After approval of the allied unit commander.

4.F.12. Operation code names.

- 4.F.13. Names and hometowns of US military units.
- 4.F.14. Service members' names and home towns with the individuals' consent.
- 4.G. The following categories of information are not releasable since their publication or broadcast could jeopardize operations and endanger lives.
 - 4.G.1. Specific number of troops in units below corps/MEF level.
 - 4.G.2. Specific number of aircraft in units at or below the Air Expeditionary Wing level.
 - 4.G.3. Specific numbers regarding other equipment or critical supplies (e.g. artillery, tanks, landing craft, radars, trucks, water, etc.).
 - 4.G.4. Specific numbers of ships in units below the carrier battle group level.
 - 4.G.5. Names of military installations or specific geographic locations of military units in the CENTCOM area of responsibility, unless specifically released by the Department of Defense or authorized by the CENTCOM commander. News and imagery products that identify or include identifiable features of these locations are not authorized for release.
 - 4.G.6. Information regarding future operations.
 - 4.G.7. Information regarding force protection measures at military installations or encampments (except those which are visible or readily apparent).
 - 4.G.8. Photography showing level of security at military installations or encampments.
 - 4.G.9. Rules of engagement.
 - 4.G.10. Information on intelligence collection activities compromising tactics, techniques or procedures.
 - 4.G.11. Extra precautions in reporting will be required at the commencement of hostilities to maximize operational surprise. Live broadcasts from airfields, on the ground or afloat, by embedded media are prohibited until the safe return of the initial strike package or until authorized by the unit commander.
 - 4.G.12. During an operation, specific information on friendly force troop movements, tactical deployments, and dispositions
That would jeopardize operational security or lives.
Information on on-going engagements will not be released unless
Authorized for release by on-scene commander.
 - 4.G.13. Information on special operations units, unique operations methodology or tactics, for example, air operations, angles of attack, and speeds; naval tactical or evasive maneuvers, etc. General terms such as "low" or "fast" may be used.
 - 4.G.14. Information on effectiveness of enemy electronic warfare.
 - 4.G.15. Information identifying postponed or canceled operations.
 - 4.G.16. Information on missing or downed aircraft or missing vessels while search and rescue and recovery operations are being planned or underway.
 - 4.G.17. Information on effectiveness of enemy camouflage, cover, deception, targeting, direct and indirect fire, Intelligence collection, or security measures.
 - 4.G.18. No photographs or other visual media showing an enemy prisoner of war or detainee's recognizable face, nametag or other identifying feature or item may be taken.
 - 4.G.19. Still or video imagery of custody operations or interviews with persons under custody.
- 4.H. The following procedures and policies apply to coverage of wounded, injured, and ill personnel:
 - 4.H.1. Media representatives will be reminded of the sensitivity of using names of

individual casualties or photographs they may have taken which clearly identify casualties until after notification of the NOK and release by OASD(PA).

4.H.2. Battlefield casualties may be covered by embedded media as long as the service member's identity is protected from disclosure for 72 hours or upon verification of NOK notification, whichever is first.

4.H.3. Media visits to medical facilities will be in accordance with applicable regulations, standard operating procedures, operations orders and instructions by attending physicians. If approved, service or medical facility personnel must escort media at all times.

4.H.4. Patient welfare, patient privacy, and next of kin/family considerations are the governing concerns about news media coverage of wounded, injured, and ill personnel in medical treatment facilities or other casualty collection and treatment locations.

4.H.5. Media visits are authorized to medical care facilities, but must be approved by the medical facility commander and attending physician and must not interfere with medical treatment. Requests to visit medical care facilities outside the continental United States will be coordinated by the unified command PA.

4.H.6. Reporters may visit those areas designated by the facility commander, but will not be allowed in operating rooms during operating procedures.

4.H.7. Permission to interview or photograph a patient will be granted only with the consent of the attending physician or facility commander and with the patient's informed consent, witnessed by the escort.

4.H.8. "Informed consent" means the patient understands his or her picture and comments are being collected for news media purposes and they may appear nationwide in news media reports.

4.H.9. The attending physician or escort should advise the service member if NOK have been notified.

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